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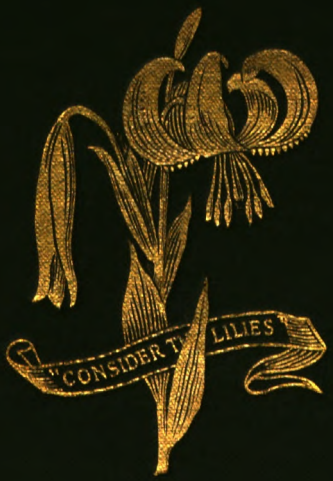
The Wit and Wisdom of Jesus

George Wright Buckley



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Having heard that you are writing on the poetry of Jesus' parables, may I send you this "Wit & Wisdom"?

With goodwill, yours,

James H. West.

Apr. 18, '07.

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The Wit and Wisdom of Jesus

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The Wit and Wisdom of Jesus

BY

GEORGE WRIGHT BUCKLEY

Author of "Carlyle and Emerson: a Contrast," "Politics and Morals," "Pain is Gain," etc., etc.

"*Humor is an invisible tear through a visible smile.*"
—FROM THE RUSSIAN.

BOSTON
JAMES H. WEST COMPANY

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Preface

A FEW years since, the author delivered a series of addresses on different aspects of Jesus' life. In one of those addresses the idea dominating the preparation of the following pages was given prominence. Since then, the idea has grown upon him with each successive reading of the gospel narratives, until it is a commanding presence not to be put aside without attempting to secure for it a public audience. This he has recently done, to a limited extent, in a magazine article.

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While conscientiously pursuing his own way in the accomplishment of his purpose, the author is aware that he is not sole worker

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in this field. Especially should Dr. Marion D. Shutter have due credit for the pioneer services he rendered several years ago, when he issued his suggestive volume on "Wit and Humor of the Bible." Along similar line has commenced to travel German scholarship, which, in general, has led in Biblical criticism with such marked profundity, patience and brave sincerity.

With thus much of preface the author sends forth this little work, knowing well that ultimately it will stand neither for more nor less of truth and worth than men shall find therein.

G. W. B.

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Behold the man ! Behold the God !
Ah, which to say, and how, and why !
In vain our tangled reasons try
The path so many feet have trod.

O man of sorrows, man of joy ! —
Of joy for all thy strife and scars, —
Whereso thou art among the stars,
In peace that nothing can destroy, —

Though we our voices may not blend
With that hoarse chant the centuries raise,
Yet is it not a sweeter praise
To say, " Our brother and our friend " ?

And if beyond this verge of time
We know thee better as thou art,
Wilt thou not clasp us heart to heart,
As fills our ears the heavenly chime ?

—*John W. Chadwick.*

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"*Who art thou, Lord?*"—the question, still, of old!
Thy silver speech hath opened man's dull ears,
Thy wisdom hath turned spirit's dross to gold,
And calms us yet, through maze of tangled years.

"*Whence camest thou?*" The Galilean hills
Which knew thy eager feet and pulsing speech—
Could they alone inspire the Word that thrills
The souls of men to farthest ages' reach?

Or for thy birth, from Heav'n with rapture rife
Didst thou indeed descend earth's woes to leaven?
We know not!—but we know thy words of life
From mortal birth lift man to birth of Heaven!

—*James H. West.*

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Introduction

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Sometimes wit lieth in pat allusion to a known story, or in seasonable application of a trivial saying, or in forging an apposite tale; sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of their sense, or the affinity of their sound; sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude; sometimes it is lodged in a sly question, in a smart answer, in a quickish reason, in a shrewd intimation, in cunningly diverting or cleverly retorting an objection; sometimes it is couched in a bold scheme of speech, in a tart irony, in a lusty hyperbole, in a startling metaphor; . . . sometimes a scenical representation of persons or things, a counterfeit speech, a mimical look or gesture, passeth for wit; . . . sometimes it riseth only from a lucky hitting upon what is strange. . . . Often it consisteth in one knows not what, and springeth up one can hardly tell how. Its ways are unaccountable and inexplicable, being answerable to the numberless rovings of fancy and windings of language.—*Barrow.*

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Introduction

TO exempt nothing from inquiry is the marked attitude of our age. The maxim of Greek philosophy, "Man is the measure of all things," has become our maxim too. In this unfettered and searching temper of the time the old theological distinction of profane and sacred loses dominion over thoughtful men: the Bible, and even the teachings and character of Jesus, are subjected to honest and comparative analysis. It is well, this free measurement of him, if only one preserve a truly reverent and grateful relation to his peerless personality.

More than a decade since, the writer was much taken with the title of a helpful little volume of "higher criticism," from the pen of Reverend Joseph Henry Crooker. The title

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was "Jesus Brought Back." The title was very taking, because it so strikingly signifies what has been transpiring these latter days. As some of the choicest specimens of antique art were lost in the accumulated rubbish of centuries, to be resurrected by the zealous efforts of modern archæologists, so the Son of man was lost in the disfiguring theology and superstition of the Christian Church, to be found again in our age of discovering and restoring manifold things. The real Jesus is being brought back. In literature, in art, in the pulpit itself, there is no mistaking the tendency to view him in human aspects and relations — to view him as under a universal law of human development and limitation, whereby even the greatest of men are linked to the imperfect age in which they live and to the more or less specialized nature of the work given them to do.

Just as we say that Aristotle and Herbert Spencer were specially gifted for philosophy, Humboldt and Darwin for science, Shake-

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speare for poetry, Edison for invention, the Rothschilds for banking, so may we not say of Jesus that his special genius was for religion and ethics? To the paramount end of bearing witness to truth on its spiritual and moral side, and in such a way as most effectually to give it vital relation to life, he was endowed with certain powers. Among these were clear perceptions of religious and moral obligation, poetic sensibility, insight and sympathetic imagination to enter readily into the consciousness of others — into their motives and reasoning, their hopes and fears, loves and hates, joys and sorrows. To these qualities add a passion for service, a gift for oratory of a genuine and persuasive kind, and, withal, a faculty of wit and humor, — most assuredly wit, *sui generis* in pre-eminent degree. This latter faculty had immeasurably to do with making his sayings stick to the memory of his hearers and become the transmitted inheritance of the race.

Who has not marveled at the apparent self-

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contradictions of individual men — individual great men? Shakespeare, almost overmastered by the heat and luxuriance of his imagination, magic sovereign of impalpable subjects in an impalpable kingdom above — how sane and true his measurements of human forces here below! What a discriminative vision of the systems and affairs of men may be given to a shy and sensitive unworldling! — witness the serene and spotless Emerson. On occasion, how mighty in action the cloistered dreamer! — timid and sickly Calvin (called "a walking hospital"), drawn from scholarly privacy into the strenuous and combative publicity of his regenerative career at Geneva; or Luther, the studious monk of Erfurt, before the Diet of Worms, wishing "to be quiet, yet hurried into the midst of tumults." So, indeed, a soul big with earnest intent, yea, with divine sadness, may also have a spring of humor to refresh men and disclose the heart of things amiss in this world; — humor often playing across some somber background as

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the sunlight plays across a dark cloud of the heavens. Strangely close to truth is the definition of a Russian, that "Humor is an invisible tear through a visible smile." Even thus was it with Thomas Carlyle in literature, the melancholy Lincoln in politics, and, in religion, "the man of sorrows," Jesus of Nazareth.

Recognizing the legitimacy and effectiveness of well-timed wit and humor, the prince of righteousness exercised them to a purpose befitting one mindful of the gravity of his mission and profoundly sensitive to the tragic side of life. Sometimes he used them to season serious discourse, simply as we use salt and sugar to season food; sometimes to pierce with his thought the thick mental integuments of one or another class of his hearers; sometimes as victorious weapons of battle with unscrupulous enemies. What concerns the author of these pages is not that he classify the wit and wisdom of Jesus under definite categories; but rather that he give them some living relation to the sublime personality

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whence they sprang, and that, too, with a religious and moral motive, and with the freedom of a broad interpretation of terms and incidents.

The utterances of the most independent minds are the resultant of outer and inner conditions in process of change. Influences of race, heredity, environment; influences which come from increased knowledge of the conduct and motives of men, which come from the noblest aspirations of them when disappointed, from the rasping sense of unavoidable combat with stupidity and selfishness, from the suffering of it all — who shall measure the potency of these to shape the usage of the mental faculties, wit and humor and the rest? Untrammeled by traditionary premises and prejudices about Jesus, may we not interpret what he did and said in the light of such influences operative in his brief career? His life was progress and tragedy, from the precocious boy in the temple, amazing the doctors, to the agony-crowned victor of Gethsemane

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and Calvary. The supreme integrity of his godward aim holds to the fatal end; but the shifting scenes and situations of the drama must needs work some change in his thought and treatment as physician to the soul of man.

Never to the eye of the most reverent Israelite, standing on the Mount of Olives, looked more enchanting the distant sanctuary of the temple in Jerusalem, with its white marble parapets and its golden-plated sides, shining in the sunlight, now "like a mountain of glittering snow, now like a sea of fire" — never more enchanting than in the opening of his ministry looked to this Messiah's untried hope and faith the prospect of life in loving, helpful fellowship with men. But thorns multiplied along the way. Pushed on by an imperative vision and conscience into conflict with established powers, the shadows cast by growing opposition encroach upon the lights as that conflict proceeds. Touching the willingness of his countrymen to accept him as the king of a "kingdom not of this world," he

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had meted out to him the sore disappointment of all the prophets of God. Hope and faith lost some of their early joyousness, as the rich flush of fruit fades out with too much coldness and shade. The boy's cruelty that despoils the nest of its birdlings makes the mother's voice more sad and piercing. And society's cruelty to its prophet, which despoils him of his cherished expectations, offspring of divine intent, makes more sad and piercing his voice in the wilderness of this world: — "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto thee! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

The view above expressed of the Galilean's career has partly determined the order in which the wit and wisdom of Jesus are presented in this book; the supposition being that, in general, the more genial forms found expression before he was subjected to positive antagonism from various quarters. Note the

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qualifying phrase, "in general"; because to make the supposition more sweeping by asserting that these more genial forms must needs all be credited to his earlier career, and those less so to his later career, would surely not tally with human nature and experience.

Let this word also be spoken, namely, that with all our latter-day research into the composition of the gospels, and into the times of nascent Christianity, it is possible to go wrong in using our freedom to stamp as genuine or spurious this, that, and the other recorded utterance of Jesus. For whatever one's conception of him, that conception presides over one's exercise of this freedom, whether one be conscious of it or not. The writer makes no pretense that it is otherwise with himself. Here and there he uses some parable or saying across which some higher critic or other draws the line as doubtful or spurious. But

> As the higher critics disagree,
> By what authority shall we see?

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I

Humor Versus Criticism

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Among those great elements of human nature which have shown themselves to be rooted in the deep, unconscious life of man, must be placed the sense of the ludicrous. . . . There are persons almost wholly destitute of it. Such persons are tied down to the substantial facts of life, whether these be important or unimportant. I will not say that they suffer more than those who have the sense of the ludicrous, for the power of the imagination that goes with this may sometimes create sorrows. They are, however, hard and wooden. Intercourse with them is like driving in a wagon without springs. . . . A natural, hearty laugh is at once a sign of sanity, and a preserver of it. One who can laugh naturally is for the moment free from any *idée fixe* that may be haunting him. He shows, for the moment at least, a superiority to the hard facts of life. —*Dr. C. C. Everett.*

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The Wit and Wisdom of Jesus

I

Humor Versus Criticism

"If we may believe our logicians, man is distinguished from all other creatures by the faculty of laughter. If we consider the frequent reliefs we receive from it, and how often it breaks the gloom which is apt to depress the mind and damp our spirits, with transient unexpected gleams of joy, one would take care not to grow too wise for so great a pleasure of life."

— ADDISON.

A CONTEMPORARY of Emerson, in describing this American seer and prophet on the lecture-platform, speaks of his indulging in the "inaudible laugh," as here and there he slipped into grave discourse some expres-

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sion of subtle and quiet humor. Very likely, too, the "inaudible laugh" and pleasant humor lent, not infrequently, winsome grace both to the preaching and the social converse of the seer and prophet of Galilee. I imagine him in his early ministry going forth with buoyant faith in men, — body healthy, mind teeming with lively imagery; loving Nature and solitude, heartily loving men and their comradeship; open to the comedy of life rather more than when further along the journey, when the tragedy of it projects itself more conspicuously into the foreground.

To behold him a son of joyous humor as well as of tragic sadness surely enhances the lovableness and perfection of his character. Yea, to think of his having now and then a good laugh in him, a free and genuine laugh, with the ring of innocent childhood and Nature's own sincerity — this also is not so shocking to the writer as once it was. Without losing his "weeping Christ," he sees him otherwise than holding the finical sentiment

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which Emerson seems to quote with approval from Lord Chesterfield, — "I am sure that since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh." But indeed, the same Emerson, who had true Platonic vision of both sides of all questions, speaks much more to our notion elsewhere: "A perception of the comic seems to be a balance-wheel in our metaphysical structure. It appears to be an essential element in a fine character. Wherever the intellect is constructive, it will be found. We feel the absence of it as a defect in the noblest and most oracular soul. The perception of the comic is a tie of sympathy with other men, a pledge of sanity, and a protection from those perverse tendencies and gloomy insanities in which fine intellects sometimes lose themselves." And Carlyle, too, England's prophet — how strongly he declares himself on this matter: "How much lies in laughter: the cipher-key wherewith we decipher the whole man! . . . The man who cannot laugh is not only fit

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for treasons, stratagems, and spoils, but his own life is already a treason and a stratagem."

Humor and laughter, with due measure of gravity behind them, are sign and seal of health and sanity; sign and seal of true kinship with humanity. Therefore Jesus, when he took upon him, or had put upon him, this humanity, was given them in goodly measure. No vender of jokes; but perceiver and revealer of disparities between folly and wisdom, pretense and practice — perceiver and revealer of the lie masquerading as truth, of wickedness skulking under outward seemings of the good.

Meager as the records are, they disclose plays of humor on the part of the Son of man which, whatever his own bearing, must have worked the risibles of some hearers into no uncertain smile, perhaps sometimes into explosive laugh.

> "Folly-painting humor, grave himself,
> Calls laughter forth."

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Let the reader catch this aspect from a few illustrations in the present chapter, and also from some in the succeeding chapter.

The traditional habit of viewing Jesus as given only to grave discourse has invested some of his utterances with a significance altogether different from what they have when the fine flavor of the speaker's humor is tasted in them. A curious instance of this is the account given in the fifteenth chapter of Matthew, which describes the peculiar treatment of the poor Canaanitish woman who beseeches him to heal her daughter, "grievously vexed with a devil." When the disciples try to keep her away, she cries the more, "Lord, help me!" And what reply does she get? Surely, one neither consistent nor pleasant to hear from the lips of the Messiah of all nations, if we construe it with literal seriousness:

"I was not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs."

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Some would make these words convict Jesus of that Jewish narrowness so prevalent with his countrymen at the time; and indeed, a certain learned rabbi of to-day finds in them a warning against throwing the bread of the new gospel to strangers, instead of keeping it wholly for his own people, — a view less tenable than the opposite one.

Had we the complete record of this incident, we should behold no narrowness on the part of the master, but only on the part of the disciples and the author of the Matthew gospel. Likely enough these words were thrown into the interrogatory form: "Is it not that I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel?" "Is it meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs?" The very witty reply comes, "Yea, Lord, for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." According to the text in Mark, Jesus so far appreciated the wit of the woman that he healed her daughter because of it: "For this saying, go thy way," and so forth.

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Taking the story in this form, the intent seems to be to get the Gentile woman's point of view, to test her faith, to rebuke the national exclusiveness of the disciples and teach a lesson of toleration. It may be, the reply ascribed to the woman was uttered by Jesus himself, — uttered in response to objections made to the extension of his mission of fellowship and Good-Samaritanship to the "heathen."

The master's freer and broader outlook early subjected him to criticism, both from within and from without the new movement in religion. Later in his career, his increased hospitality provokes among his Jewish followers murmurs of provincial prejudice and jealousy. "Are these last converts to share equally with us, who belong to God's chosen people and were first to come into the service of the Messianic kingdom?" Jesus, as is his wont, makes use of the parable to rebuke this natural but selfish spirit. He draws the graphic and lively picture of the workers in the vineyard:

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"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with his laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the market-place idle; and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man has hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard. And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. And when the

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first came, they supposed they would receive more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have spent but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take that which is thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto these last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last." *

This parable contains a passage or so which the devil may quote for his purpose; and yet within it lies one of the most comprehensive truths of justice and love. It is much more than a rebuke to the selfish pride and desire for precedence among his disciples. It has a universal application to human relations and

* Matt. 20, 1–16.

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obligations. First, it rebukes a complaining attitude toward God, which, put into words, is this: — "My neighbor has a larger slice of cake than I. Greater success and happiness are his, and yet he works no harder to get them. Ergo, I am defrauded of part of my wages." Second, it rebukes persons of two opposite classes in society: on the one hand, those of a "serving class," who see their superiors through the "evil eye" of envy; on the other hand, those of a ruling class, whose proud, self-assertive egoism overvalues their particular work, forgetting that

> "All service is the same with God —
> With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
> Are we; there is no last or first."

In the gospel accounts we get intimations of some disposition on the part of John's disciples to question the ways of Jesus. These two prophets stood, to their age, as conspicuously different as, to our age, have stood Carlyle and Emerson. But they recognized, as

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did the latter prophets, that they were working in unity of spirit for the new dispensation.

Most admirable are the tact and temper of the Nazarene when taken to task because his disciples do not fast, as is the custom of the Pharisees and the disciples of John! In reply he shows how little he values fasting as an obligatory rite, not so much by opposing his questioners with grave argument, as by using that which is more effectual, a playful humor. Behold his face light up with a good-natured smile as he compares himself and his disciples to a bridegroom and his wedding-friends: — "Can the sons of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast."

Touching the argument for keeping old forms with new thought — argument held in stock by the conservative of every age — he goes on to make this analogy:

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"No man rendeth a piece from a new garment and putteth it upon an old garment; else he will rend the new, and also the piece from the new will not agree with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins; else the new wine will burst the skins, and itself will be spilled, and the skins will perish. But new wine must be put into fresh wine-skins. And no man having drunk old wine desireth new: for he saith, The old is good." *

The humor of the last sentence reflects true insight into the conservative nature of the far larger part of human society at all times. For it, "The old is good."

According to all three of the synoptic gospels, it is in this connection that Jesus is censured for the opposite of fasting, namely, for feasting and fellowship with publicans and sinners. And how does he meet the censure? By a reply memorable to all succeeding generations for the sympathetic wit and wisdom of it: "They that are whole have no need of

* Matt. 9, 14–17; Luke 5, 33–39.

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a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what this meaneth: I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; for I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Many a minister has had occasion to rebuke with this pregnant saying the manifestation, in or out of his flock, of this self-righteous and exclusive attitude toward individual sinners, or toward some lower strata of society.

Having come repeatedly in contact with this fault-finding temper, directed sometimes against John the Baptist, sometimes against himself, he sets it forth in this happy comparison:

"But whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? They are like children that sit in the market-places and call to one another, saying, We piped unto you, and ye did not dance; we wailed, and ye did not mourn. For John is come neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil; the Son of man is come eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-

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bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified by her works," — or, as Luke has more poetically put it, "of her children." The generation is a frivolous and carping generation; whimsical and petulant as a lot of children playing at mock weddings and funerals. It is predisposed to set its face against the new dispensation, whether it appear in the form of John's austere morality and asceticism, or in the broader and more cheerful comradeship of Jesus. By reason of the contrast, the humor of the passage is all the more effective for being preceded in the text — as likely it was in fact — by that generous and truly eloquent tribute to his contemporary, reaching a climax in the words, "Among them born of woman there is none greater than John."

I cannot forbear noting here the contrast between Jesus and Gautama the Buddha in reference to their method of meeting criticism, — the latter's dialectic gravity, the former's nimble wit, or playful humor, which

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quickly closes controversy. Jesus had that highest wit which disarms a contestant with a single answer.

To illustrate the difference: When Devadetta (the Judas among the disciples of the Hindu sage) upbraids his master for not observing more stringent rules and self-mortification, the Buddha makes reply after this fashion:

"Truly, the body is full of impurity and its end is the charnal-house, for it is impermanent and destined to be dissolved into its elements. . . . It is not good to indulge in the pleasures of the body; but neither is it good to neglect our bodily needs and to heap filth upon its impurities. The lamp that is not cleansed and filled with oil will be extinguished, and a body that is unkempt, unwashed and weakened by penance will not be a fit receptacle for the light of truth."

When the Buddha approaches the nearest to Jesus' pregnant wit and humor, he still speaks as a dialectician. Nowhere is he more

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happy than in the reputed conversation with a young ascetic, called Sona. The latter has become so disgusted with austere repression of himself that he is about to turn into the opposite course of unrestrained pleasure. On bringing the matter to his master's attention the following dialogue takes place:

"How is it, Sona; were you able to play the lute before you left home?"

"Yes, sire."

"What do you think then, Sona; if the strings of your lute are too tightly strung, will the lute give out the proper tone, and be fit to play?"

"It will not, sire."

"And what do you think, Sona; if the strings of your lute be strung too slack, will the lute then give out the proper tone, and be fit to play?"

"It will not, sire."

"But, how, Sona, if the strings of your lute be not strung too tight or too slack; if they have the proper degree of tension, will the

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lute then give out the proper sound and be fit to play?"

"Yes, sire."

"In the same way, Sona, energy too much strained tends to excessive zeal, and energy too much relaxed tends to apathy. Therefore, Sona, cultivate in yourself the mean of energy, and press on to the mean in your mental powers, and place this before you as your aim." *

Broadly speaking, these two oriental founders of a new religion may be said to differ somewhat as Shakespeare and Ben Jonson differ in literature. Wisdom comes from Jesus as the flash of insight, in the form of apotheme, proverb, picturesque parable; from the Buddha it comes usually as a syllogism, or chain of closely related and dependent propositions. Jesus darts to the heart of the matter on the wings of that adjusting imagination and intuition which sees at once the principle that unites things apparently differ-

* Oldenberg's "Buddha," p. 189.

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ent, and the principle that differentiates things apparently alike. The Buddha moves more slowly in detail, encumbered rather by his more heavy armor of much learning and logic. In replying to questioners he reveals truth as the sun sheds light at early morn, gradually making objects stand out clear and distinct. Jesus reveals truth rather as the sun which at mid-day escapes from a dark cloud: instantly all shadows are dispelled with effulgent light.

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II

Life-Sketches: Turning "Men's Ears into Eyes"

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Folly, conceit, foppery, silliness, affectation, hypocrisy, attitudinizing and pedantry of all shades, and in all forms, everything that poses, prances, bridles, struts, bedizens, and plumes itself, everything that takes itself seriously and tries to impose itself on mankind, — all this is the natural prey of the satirist, so many targets ready for his arrows, so many victims offered to his attack. And we all know how rich the world is in prey of this kind ! —*Amiel.*

All wit does but divert men from the road
In which things vulgarly are understood,
And force mistake and ignorance to own
A better sense than commonly is known.
—*Butler.*

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II

Life-Sketches: Turning "Men's Ears Into Eyes"

"The presence of the ideal of right and of truth in all action makes the yawning delinquencies of practice remorseful to the conscience, tragic to the interest, but droll to the intellect."

—EMERSON.

BREVITY may be "the soul of wit," but not so surely is it the soul of humor. Often by extension, rather, does the latter come to effective head. Because of the very brevity of the gospel text I believe the humor of Jesus is less conspicuous than otherwise it would be. With fuller text I also question if certain parables in which is found humor would be open to the psychological objection made against their genuineness in some quarters.

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Belonging to this class are the parables about the widow and the judge, and the persistent man who clamored at his neighbor's door for bread until from sheer weariness the latter handed out, or threw out, all he asked for. *

"Which of you shall have a friend, and go unto him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him. And he from within shall answer, Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise, and give him as many as he needeth."

The picture of the irrepressible widow, pestering the unrighteous judge into granting her request, is companion to this:

"There was in a city a judge which feared not God, and regarded not man; and there

* Luke 11, 5–13; 18, 1–8.

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was a widow in that city; and she came oft unto him, saying, Do me justice of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will do her justice, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. And shall not God do justice by his children who cry to him day and night, and he is long-suffering over them?" The phrase, "though I fear not God nor regard man," has the edge of fine satire if directed, as I believe it was, at a class of judicial magistrates of the time more noted for skepticism and cynicism than for righteous judgment.

Respecting the application made in the text of the two preceding parables, objection is offered that Jesus would not have thus represented God as wearied by the importunities of men into granting their petitions. He may, however, have glided momentarily into the humor of these parables, in some discourse or other on the power and virtue of prayerful

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persistence and patience in well-doing despite much discouragement and long-deferred reward. The central thought is, if unrighteous men comply with just requests, how much more shall the righteous Father of men! "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" With quick mind for the incongruous, Jesus presses on his hearers the interrogatories which admit of but one answer:

"Of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

With all his idealism, Jesus had an observing eye for the practical activities of men, and was not without a sense of the comic in their push and pull for material things. Why should they not display equal devotedness, equal heat and energy, in the pursuit of spiritual things?

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In the parable of the Cunning Steward we have another analogy drawn from the self-seeking affairs of business, which blends serious admonition with humor. It was probably spoken more especially for the benefit of Judas and some of the newly converted publicans and sinners, who were trying to be citizens of two kingdoms, that of God and that of the devil:

"There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, What is this that I hear of thee? render the account of thy stewardship; for thou canst be no longer steward. And the steward said within himself, What shall I do, seeing that my lord taketh away the stewardship from me? I have not the strength to dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship they may receive me into their houses. And calling to him each one of his lord's debtors, he

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said to the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bond, and sit down quickly and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. He saith unto him, Take thy bond, and write fourscore. And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely [evinced worldly smartness]: for the sons of this world are, for their own generation, wiser than the sons of the light." * That is, they show more thought and diligence in the transient affairs of earth than some of my disciples in the permanent affairs of heaven. Be ye faithful in the higher prudence, as they are faithful in the lower. †

"He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and he that is unright-

* Luke 16, 1–13.

† One of the sorriest illustrations of the mischief of literal interpretation is furnished by the fact that the good pagan emperor, Julian, and others, have made this parable reflect on the ethics of Jesus.

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eous in a very little is unrighteous in much. . . . No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. *Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*" You cannot divide your allegiance in the spirit of the Spaniard who, on his death-bed, being told by his confessor how the devil tortured people in hell, replied, "I hope my lord the devil is not so cruel." Rebuked for referring to the devil as "my lord," he retorted again, "Excuse me for calling him so; but I know not into what hands I may fall; and if I happen into his, I hope he will use me the better for giving him good words." The "good-lord-and-good-devil" people Jesus found numerous enough in his times, as they are in all times.

In Luke 12, 42–48, we have another humorous description of a different sort of unfaithful steward; *per contra*, one without even worldly calculation or cunning foresight, — a stupid, lawless, stomach-mongering, abusive steward.

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But this is another parable across which some draw the line. To them it expresses only a disappointed expectation of the master's second coming to earth, and the desire to keep wavering ones steadfast in the faith. Despite the objection to some of the setting, the picture may be taken as one by Jesus.

Reading between the lines, I see him engaged in conversation with his disciples about the need of a more commanding faith in a God of righteousness as a never-absent presence in the world. I hear him speak of a class of people acting as though they thought the just Rewarder and Punisher is at times off duty, that he "goeth on a journey," or "peradventure sleepeth," as Elijah mockingly said to the prophets of Baal. In breaking away from the constraint of moral obedience and patient waiting, they are like the foolish servant who, because his lord went on a journey and delayed his return, abandoned himself to lawless revelry and abuse of authority. "He beat the man-servants and maid-servants,

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ate and drank and was drunken." But lo, the lord unexpectedly appears on the scene to catch him, chastise him and cast him out. The Divine Master of every such servant "shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder (from the reward of the righteous), and appoint his portion with the unfaithful," — according to the inherent nature of things.

In this connection, the whole law of trusteeship, or personal responsibility, is condensed into a single sentence: "To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more." *

The parable of the Ten Talents (Matt. 25, 14–30) may fall into line here, a most memorable vehicle of a vital truth about the gifts and deserts and trusteeship of men! In deserved fashion it lays bare the culpability of much too numerous a class in the social structure of every age and clime. It is the

* Matt. 24, 45–51; Luke 12, 42–48.

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class who covet somebody else's gift and circumstances, and, because they have them not, go moping and disgruntled through life, a grievous burden to their betters. It is they of small talent who waste life and power in ill-natured complaining of those of larger talent — forever complaining of their want of opportunity, yet making no sufficient effort to improve well the opportunity they have, much less to seek to create opportunity. Jesus tells these people they shall not escape the visitation of that universal law of cause and effect operative both in the material and spiritual world — the law which the parable sums up in the maxim, "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away."

Humor, and genial humor, too, lies behind most of the illustrations thus far given, and others that might be given in this connection. It is an element in the lively image of the woman searching with candle and broom for

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the lost coin, and so delighted on finding it that she calls in the neighbors to rejoice with her — verily, like a woman, indeed! * It is in the picture of the guest appearing at the wedding-feast improperly dressed for the occasion, and thrown into speechless embarassment by the challenge of the host: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment?" Spiritually translated, Why hast thou not prepared, or disciplined thyself, to be a citizen in the kingdom of God? † It is in the description of the good man sowing wheat by day and the bad man sowing tares by night, so that the one can hardly be rooted out without destroying the other, ‡ — a realistic bit of symbolism in its application to the actual status of human society everywhere and at all times; a "palpable hit," too, at the over-impatient radical who wants to take the kingdom of heaven by violence, despite God's law of evolution. That the attainment of divine

* Luke 15, 8–10.

† Matt. 23, 1–13. ‡ Matt. 13, 24–30.

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ends by growth, rather than by sudden leaps and miraculous removal of obstructions, was his Father's method became more clear to the parabolist himself, as life's drama moved to its consummation.

Yet again, humor free and vivid is displayed in the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25, 1–13), — a parable, however, ascribed by some authorities to the apostolic age. It may have received touches from another than Jesus, but the picture in the main bears the stamp of the same mind from which emanated the parable of the Ten Talents. If another's, surely its author had a superb genius for parables, very like that of Jesus. And why must we forever be giving a theological or party twist to such parables? Jesus had a high instinct for the universal and perennial symbolism we find in this story of the Ten Virgins. It is a telling satire on the thoughtless and thriftless, who never stock themselves with the oil of knowledge and discipline, which in this world, or any world, is exacted as the price of adequacy

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to meet the golden hours that glide upon us unawares for our betterment. Foolish-virgin class! — is it that we must always have them with us, they always relying on the wise-virgin class to supply in time of need the oil they have neglected to provide for themselves? Verily, a rational imitation by society of the refusal of the wise virgins in the parable to supply oil for the negligent might help immensely to discourage much folly and wickedness in Israel.

Would you have a different sort of interpretation? — a more spiritual one? Well, Jesus may have used the bridegroom figuratively, somewhat as the parable is written. He may have used the symbolism of the wise virgins, with lamps and oil to fill them, as illustrating both the form and substance of the true religious faith; while the foolish virgins may indicate those who have only the form, or appearance, of the faith. The lamp may stand for outwardness, and the oil for inwardness, of religion. He who would be

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wise, religious and moral in the *future* must be wise, religious and moral *now*.

"Many are called, but few are chosen." Would you be one of the chosen company of the bridegroom of knowledge and power and righteousness, and of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit? then

> Friend, put oil in the lamp to-day,
> For light to-morrow on thy way.

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III

Misunderstood

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To be misunderstood even by those whom one loves is the cross and bitterness of life. It is the secret of that sad and melancholy smile on the lips of great men which so few understand ; it is the cruelest trial reserved for self-devotion ; it is what must have oftenest have wrung the heart of the Son of man ; and if God could suffer, it would be the wound we should ever be inflicting upon Him. He also — He above all — is the great misunderstood, the least comprehended.

—*Amiel.*

There are people who can never understand a trope, or any second or expanded sense given to your words, or any humor ; but remain literalists, after hearing the music, and poetry, and rhetoric, and wit, of seventy or eighty years. They are past the help of surgeon or clergy. —*Emerson.*

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III

Misunderstood

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."
—JESUS.

"Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word." —JESUS.

"Thou art like the Spirit which thou comprehendest."
—GOETHE.

WE are wont to speak of Jesus as addressing himself to a common humanity; and so he did. "The common people heard him gladly." But let it not be forgotten how much he spoke to an uncommon humanity. He felt the unity of the race, but he also realized the tremendous diversity of it. Not very long had he been in the ministry before he had ample objective evidence of the great difference existing among men in capacity to

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apprehend spiritual truth, and still more in disposition and will to apply it to life. In the happiest vein of covert criticism he sets forth this difference, in the parable of the Sower: *

"Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them." Under this figure of speech he dismisses at once as hopeless the people who are incapable of understanding his message, through their want of the sense of spiritual things. "And others fell upon rocky places, where they had not much earth; and straightway they sprang up because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was risen they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away." This second set of people manifest great delight the first time they hear the word, comprehending it a little, but not in any fullness of meaning. Young ministers, and young leaders generally of any good cause, get sorely deceived by this class of superficial

* Matt. 13, 3–9; Mark 4, 3–9; Luke 8, 5–8.

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hearers, with their superficial enthusiasms. "And others fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them." A third class of hearers understand the word, and really open their hearts to it. But they have not the moral stamina to hold fast when the actual stress and strain of care and temptation come. "And others fell into good ground, and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing, and brought forth, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some a hundred fold." These last are the hearers who not only understand well the word, but earnestly, according to capacity, disseminate it and put it into their daily conduct. Jesus concludes very laconically when he exclaims, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

This parable is a fine example of his gift for using figuratively the operations of Nature to present the intellectual and moral characteristics of classes in society. He doubtless beheld in the multitude before him representatives of all the four classes above described.

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And some, it is to be hoped, recognized themselves in the picture, notwithstanding the statement that among the disciples there were those dull enough to require a private exposition. They seemed to belong to that multitude of whom he said, "Seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

Here I am led to note a phase of Jesus' life which presents a strange mixture of both humor and pathos. It is that phase which caused him now and then to be misunderstood by the multitude, and even by his own disciples, on account of his use of figurative and mystical language. They comprehended only in the letter, much as did little Pip in "Great Expectations." Hearing his sister speak of bringing him up "by hand," he supposed she referred to the frequent application upon him of her "hard and heavy hand."

Fatal bias of men for materialistic and literal interpretation! To the idealistic and poetic temperament, is it the cause more of

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smiles or tears? Did it not at times evoke the former from the Son of man? And is it not possible there were occasions when he felt inclined to test his hearers' apprehension in this respect? Some passages in the gospels seem to imply this.

Instead of saying, "Beware of the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees," he says, "Beware of the leaven," and so forth. This sets his disciples, or the more stupid of them, to questioning whether the master uses such speech because they have no bread, and to warn them against the kind of leaven in the bread eaten by those sects. At another time, refusing food with the remark, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," they wonder if somebody has handed in an extra dish for his special delectation.

If they so misunderstood the master, how much the more a simple Samaritan woman, or a promiscuous crowd of his countrymen, when treated to certain mystical and symbolical sayings as related in the fourth gospel! Did he

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indulge in such language, with such people, on any occasion, — then no marvel if many thought, "This is a hard saying," and "went back, and walked no more with him"; no marvel if "even his brethren did not believe on him."

Historically not altogether reliable, these dialogues in "John"; but, it would seem, psychologically not so exceedingly difficult to accept, as is clear when one remembers how transubstantiation and consubstantiation have been doctrines of the Christian Church, built by the literalist upon the phrases, "eat my flesh" and "drink my blood." Reading in the Koran that God opened and cleansed Mohammed's heart, have not millions in the Orient supposed that the physical heart of the prophet was miraculously detached from his body, thoroughly washed, and reattached to perform again its life-invigorating functions?

Amid all the beautiful and ingenious blending of fact and fiction in the fourth gospel,

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we get here and there a quite probable likeness of Jesus, as to his inclination to use paradoxical, figurative, and mystical language, startling his hearers, and sometimes causing misunderstanding bordering on the comic. The scene in which Nicodemus is told he "must be born again"; still more, the following scene with his conservative countrymen, read like a satire on the general incapacity of those who live in the letter which "killeth" to enter into the thought of those who live in the spirit which "giveth life."

Jesus is represented as calling himself "the bread which came down out of heaven." "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world." His hearers wonder what such strange speech is all about. "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How doth he now say, I am come down out of heaven? How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

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Again, he tells them, "If God were your father, ye would love me; for I came forth and am come of God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. . . . He that is of God heareth the words of God; for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God. The Jews answered and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"

Still more mystified and vexed are they when he declares, "If a man keep my word, he shall never see death."

"Now we know thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my word, he shall never taste death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead?"

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad."

"Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?"

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"Verily, verily," responds Jesus, "before Abraham was, I am." *

By this time, we are told, they were ready to stone him. Not in Goethe's "Faust" do the poetic outbursts of the hero fall more lifeless on the dull ears of the prosaic, materialistic Wagner than falls such speech on the ears of the Jews in this scene from "John."

* John 6, 41–42; 8, 51–58.

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IV

Kindred and Neighbors

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They expressed their surprise at his (Jesus') assuming the prophetic function, . . . they showed no sympathy when he spoke of his mission; in short, they gave him a thousand proofs that they did not understand him. They were far too much accustomed to him, had too often seen him go in and out, seen him work and rest, eat and drink, to be able to look on him as a prophet. . . . And so [from kindred and neighbors] he met with no appreciation, no enthusiasm, no faith; and such faint hopes as he had ever entertained were dashed to the ground. . . . And to this day the ordinary run of mankind judge by the same kind of purely accidental circumstances. No height of moral grandeur will convince them that those with whom they are familiar are anything but very ordinary sort of people. —*Dr. I. Hooykaas.*

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IV

Kindred and Neighbors

"*Is not this the carpenter's son?*"—NEW TESTAMENT.

"*He is beside himself.*"—NEW TESTAMENT.

WITH what spontaneity of wit our spiritual leader meets and masters varied objections and opposing elements that rise unbidden in his way! His answers often come as a searchlight unexpectedly turned on obscure objects in the darkness. They surprise the hearer from a new point of view with apt quotation, startling epigram, puzzling paradox, or vivid parable, minted as fresh coin in his own brain. It was a favorite method of Jesus to administer rebuke and criticism by means of the parable. He used it on friend

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and foe, much as Lincoln used his humorous stories, to make his admonitions more graciously received or more readily apprehended. "By a parable," observes the Buddha, "many a wise man perceives the meaning of what is being said." The simple man may sometimes the better perceive it, too.

Striking proof Jesus shows of wit and insight into human nature when, early in his ministry, he returns home to preach in the synagogue of his native village. * His former townsmen "wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth." But — yes, *but* — "Is not this the carpenter's son? And his mother and brothers and sisters — are they not all with us?" Some were offended at his manifest superiority to their standard of mediocrity. Offended also was the young evangelist: in the consciousness of his spiritual authority offended. Alas for sensitive genius seeking early recognition in the native town! Wise words spoken there

* Matt. 13, 54–58; Mark 6, 1–6; Luke 4, 18–30.

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are but half wise, and good deeds but half good.

"Doubtless ye will say unto me, Physician, heal thyself [it is likely they did say that]: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in this country. But of a truth, I say unto you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, . . . when there came a great famine over the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel, in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." This deft application of what they accepted as historical facts he clinches with the famous utterance, "Verily, a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, among his own kin, and in his own house."

Many a moral and religious teacher has realized the force of the last saying since it sprang from the lips of the greatest among

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prophets. I have little doubt that he had been in some measure prepared for skepticism in the synagogue by skepticism in the home. Perhaps there is less poetry in this view than in the one so prevalent in the Christian Church; but the writer cannot avoid reading, between the lines, that Jesus of Nazareth felt the want of appreciative sympathy on the part even of his own mother. With him the first obligation was "to bear witness to truth." Reproved by his parents for tarrying in the temple, he exclaims, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Again, when word is brought him, while preaching in the open air, that his mother and brothers wait on the outskirts of the crowd to speak with him, he evinces the remarkable facility of his mind to convert trivial incidents into the enforcement of the nature of that momentous business. Upon his hearers flashes the comprehensive thought that the ties of spiritual affinity are more binding than those of flesh and blood.

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"Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? Behold, my mother and my brethren are they who hear the word of God, and do it."

Still another retort of this surprising character springs to his lips when some "woman out of the multitude," in the ecstasy of her feeling, cries out, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts that thou didst suck!"

"Yea, rather," comes the reply, "blessed are they that hear the word of God, and do it!"

Probably the kindred of Jesus in general looked upon him as a fanatic (in the language of these days, a "crank") because of his intense absorption in his work of evangelism, to the disregard of the so-called practical interests of life. I suppose they advised him to be a carpenter like his father, instead of tramping about the country, preaching without pay. He did not take the advice, and so he was "beside himself." How little

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Jesus was troubled about "material" things, the craving for which causes so much discontent and contention among the sons and daughters of men! When the good-hearted Martha, like many housewives, makes so much of her dinner that she has no time for the word of the wise man under her roof; when she emerges from the kitchen hot and flushed, and complains of her sister for leaving the "work" to sit "at the Lord's feet," he presents a contrast of the utmost serenity. Seriously, yet, I apprehend, with the smile of humor, he replies, "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things; one thing only is needful [or, few things are needful]; for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." *

At another time some one wants him to intercede with a brother to divide an inheritance; and the only satisfaction he gets is a humorous picture of what frequently occurs on this planet:

* Luke 10, 38–42.

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"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my corn and goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Therefore, "take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." *

Again he observes, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treas-

* Luke 12, 16–21.

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ure is, there will thy heart be also." Then, chiding his disciples for that over-anxiety about the future which doubles pain, he sums up, laconically, "Be not, therefore, anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Some excellent proverbs and sayings, expressing the above thought of Jesus, are afloat among the nations, such as the following:

"Let your trouble tarry till its own day comes."

"He is miserable once, who feels it; but twice, who fears it before it comes."

Sir Thomas More speaks, if I remember well, the same thought in rhyme:

> "If evils come not, then our fears are vain;
> And if they do, fear but augments the pain."

Jesus wears no fetters. Freely he judges the ways of men, unblinded by conventional views about wealth, social customs, or filial obligations. Continually, therefore, he runs

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counter to prevailing opinion and prejudice. Continually he says and does the unexpected. How he astonishes the hearer by showing him to himself in a new relation, and in such a way as to convict him of his error! How he exposes selfishness, whether manifested by those outside, or inside, the fold! His wit reveals it as a sunbeam reveals the floating dust of a room. On witnessing at some place of feasting the swine-like exhibition (very common at church-suppers and similar ministrations to the human animal) of a lot of people scrambling for the best seats at table, he must have appreciated the comedy as well as the gravity in the scene, when he rebuked them in this wise:

"When thou art bidden to a feast, do not sit down in the chief seat, lest haply a more honorable man than thou be bidden, and he that bade thee and him shall come and say to thee, Give this man place; and then shalt thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art bidden, go and sit

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down in the lowest place, that when he that hath bidden thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory in the presence of all that sit at meat with thee. For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." *

This incident in the life of Jesus recalls at the present writing a long-forgotten incident in the life of Emerson, as related to me some years ago by a friend. One evening when Mr. Emerson was to lecture in a small western town, he was invited to a church supper; and there he was treated to just about the sort of spectacle recorded in Luke. In serene, benevolent dignity he stood at one side watching the unseemly haste to get first seated at the table. He did not say anything, as did Jesus; but the amused expression of his face plainly said, "O human biped, thou art a comic beast!"

The dramatic Luke makes Jesus amaze his

* Luke 14, 7–14.

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hearers still more when he prescribes to his host the following remarkable rule of conduct, exacting an unselfishness so positively in contrast to the all but universal practice of men:

"When thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; because they have not wherewith to recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just."

A striking parallel to this admonishment of Jesus, — found in the "Phædrus" of Plato, written some four hundred years before the time of Jesus, — is worthy of reproduction in this connection. In Plato's dialogue, Socrates is reported as saying: "In general, when you make a feast, invite not your friend, but the beggar and the empty soul,

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for they will love you, and attend you, and come about your doors, and will be the best pleased and the most grateful, and will invoke blessings on your head." *

The prompt wit of Jesus to admonish and rebuke, by planting in the foreground a standard of life and duty astonishingly at variance with the general sentiment of his hearers, is displayed on divers occasions. Not to multiply illustrations in this connection, let reference be made to only two other instances. The one is that of the dialogue with Simon (Luke 7, 36–50) respecting the "fallen woman" kneeling repentant at the master's feet. Mark the refinement of Socratic wit with which he gets the "holier-than-thou" Pharisee committed to the sentiment he desires to exalt:

"Simon, I have something to say unto thee. . . . A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith

* Jowett's "Plato," I., 539.

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to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most? Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath wet my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet [or kiss much]. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

The other instance is the unique treatment of the foolish question as to which of Jesus' followers should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Nothing could have been more surprising, or better calculated to produce the desired impression, than to set a child in their

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midst, with the remark, "Verily I say unto you, except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven,"—and so forth. *

* Matt. 18, 1–7; Mark 10, 13–16; Luke 18, 15–17.

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V

Pithy Sayings and Retorts

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Exclusive of the abstract sciences, the largest and worthiest portion of our knowledge consists of aphorisms, and the greatest and best of men is but an aphorism. — *Coleridge.*

Like all the rabbis of the time, Jesus, little given to consecutive reasonings, compressed his doctrine into aphorisms concise and of an expressive form, sometimes strange and enigmatical. — *Renan.*

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V

Pithy Sayings and Retorts

"In a numerous collection of our Savior's apothegms there is not to be found one example of sophistry or of false subtilty, or of anything approaching thereunto."
—PALEY.

A PROVERB is the generalization of much human experience in a brief saying that sticks to the memory of ordinary men. As Lord John Russell has finely said, it "is the wit of one man, and the wisdom of many." In the mint of the superb wit of the man of Galilee were coined the most pregnant sayings which have gone into the world's permanent circulation. How much are we his debtors daily for some pleasantry, or epigram, that gives pith and point to speech! This

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chapter is devoted to a few of his more sententious utterances (some of them in the form of retorts), which do not fall into line elsewhere in these pages. The experiences of life frequently bring these to the lips:

"There is nothing covered which shall not be revealed." The Latins had it, "Time reveals all things."

"It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come, but woe unto him through whom they come."

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art with him in the way."

"Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered"—a pithy proverb having more than local application to the Roman power carrying its eagles into all the ancient world; having the solemn and universal meaning that moral and spiritual degeneracy, in individual or nation, must meet stern judgment, even though it come by other forces of selfishness, or by carrion eagles whatsoever.

"Many are called, but few are chosen."

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Only a few respond to the call and make themselves worthy to be chosen. The Buddha said, "Few are there among men who cross the river, and reach the goal. The great multitude are running up and down the shore."

When Jesus urges the simple fishermen to become apostles of his truth, he wittily remarks, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Exhorting his disciples to let their "light shine before men," he says, "A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house."

Delegating his disciples for missionary work, he tells them, "The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few." "The laborer is worthy of his hire." Again, he admonishes them, "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." "If they have called the master of the house

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Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household!"

Realizing the tragic fate of the prophet to bring division among men through his witness to truth, he exclaimed, "Think not that I came to send peace, but a sword." "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." If objection be made to the doctrine, "love your enemies," "do good to them that hate you," and the like, how surely he punctures its selfishness, and sweeps away all props, in this keen logic: "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much. Be ye, therefore, better than they, even as your heavenly Father, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." *

* Matt. 5, 45; Luke 6, 32–34.

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When, in the overflow of her gratitude, the Magdalen pours on the master's head the precious ointment, and some of the disciples (Judas, according to "John") show displeasure because it might have been sold for the benefit of the poor, he, with smiling serenity, reminds them, "Ye have the poor *always* with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do *them* good, but *me* ye have not always."

Having been questioned as to one's duty toward those in authority, he discriminately says, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; all things, therefore, whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe; but do *not* ye after *their works;* for they *say, and do not.*" This is in line with the Spanish saying, "Do as the friar says, and not as he does."

Hearing some of his countrymen boast of having Abraham for their father, he presses home to their attention the chasm between their professions and practices, in the significant reflection, "If ye were Abraham's children ye would do the works of Abraham."

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When he perceives that the multitude are prompted to follow him by motives belonging to the animal man rather than the spiritual man, he turns on them with the just rebuke, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs [evidences of power to satisfy spiritual hunger]; but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled." In these latter days we frequently hear the sarcasm, "they seek after the loaves and fishes," flung at a class of office-seekers whose profuseness in phrases of patriotism is only exceeded by their zeal in henchmanship to the dispensers of political patronage.

People profess that they will follow him whithersoever he goes; and with a touch of humor, a touch of sadness too, he describes the homelessness his mission necessitates, in the saying, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Then, taking these people at their word, he summons them forthwith to follow him and wholly sur-

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render themselves to the new movement for righteousness' sake. But they offer excuses, both on account of the dead and the living, and so the pregnant replies: "Let the dead bury their dead," and, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking backward, is fit for the kingdom of God."

An exalted faith had Jesus in the reformable capacity of men, but he had a notion, likewise, that what we call heredity and environment figured somewhat in the matter. And the notion very likely grew upon him as he came in contact more and more with differing varieties of the *genus homo.*

"Continuous pounding will reform the world," said a distinguished divine. Oh, yes, — but, meanwhile, exceedingly trying is the world to the patience even of the saints! Jesus, the lofty idealist and patient son of faith, learned by repeated failure how hard a thing it is to lodge the divine word in some ears. There were those who could not receive it if they would, and others who would not

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receive it if they could—"for their hardness of heart" would not receive it. Hence the significant remark, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Hence, too, the oft-quoted admonition, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you."

The above passage is thought by some to have been written in the interest of the Peter-party, as against the Paul-party. To me, however, it sounds genuine, and the connection above intimated seems natural. Jesus verified, in the years of his ministry, the everlasting truth of similar sayings, which had sprung from the oriental mind and passed on from the far East; which indeed had come to him early, in the proverbs of his own Bible, namely, the exceeding difficulty of imparting high things to the very foolish or the very wicked. This is not a pleasant conclusion, but, being drawn from general human experience, it has found expression among many

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people, from the lore of the ancient Brahmins to the "Faust" of modern Goethe. In the book of Proverbs are such sayings as these:

"He that reproveth a scorner getteth himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot." "Speak not in the ears of a fool; for he will despise the wisdom of thy words." The Jews had also the saying, "A dog returneth to his vomit, and a hog that is washed to his wallowings in the mire." "Though you anoint an ass all over with perfumes, it feels not your fondness, but will turn again and kick you." So says the Veman.* The Tamal has it: "Though religious instruction be whispered into the ears of the ass, nothing will come of it but the accustomed braying." * One of the Buddha's parables declares: "A fool, though he live in the company of the wise, understands nothing of the true doctrine, as a spoon tastes not the flavor of the soup."

Varied and striking is the utterance of the

* Doctor Shutter's "Wit and Humor of the Bible."

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same truth among the moderns: "The sow prefers bran to roses" (French). "To wash the head of an ass is loss of suds" (Spanish). Some character of Shakespeare exclaims, —

> "Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile."

Goethe's "Faust" has the line, —

> "Wise words in dull ears are but lifeless lore";

while another German speaks in humorous rhyme, —

> "Set a frog on a golden stool,
> Off it hops again into the pool."

When questioned about riches and rich men, the working of Jesus' mind is prompt and facile, in a way peculiarly his own. While some of the utterances in Luke may be taken as expressing the antipathy of the author of that book toward the wealthy classes, it is not permissible to cast out on this ground all passages that do not happen to adjust well to the western mind in an age of commercialism.

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Take the reflections called forth by the scene with the rich young man, described in all the synoptic gospels. The narrator relates that when told to part with the "great possessions" which were preventing him from a complete espousal of the cause for which the master was fighting the incomparable fight, "he went away sorrowful." The writer once heard Phillips Brooks remark that the young man was enjoined to give away his wealth because he did not know how to use it. The attitude of this truly noble divine, and of Jesus as he presented it, seems to have been much the same as that of the Buddha. The Hindu sage, we infer from the records, pronounced not against wealth and power, but against the selfish use of them, and "the cleaving to wealth and power."

Whatever the reader thinks about Jesus' advice to the rich young man, mark the drift of the conversation that follows close upon it (Mark 10, 17–27). First he startles his disciples with an oriental exaggeration, and then

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he puts in the qualifications which link his teaching closer to our modern view of the matter.

"Looking round about, he saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answereth them, Children, how hard is it for them that *trust* in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished exceedingly, saying unto him, Then who can be saved?"

Faith in an omnipotent power at once furnishes the answer:

"With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God."

The Italians have a saying, "He that is afraid of the devil does not grow rich"; while the French put it in this way: "To grow rich one needs but to turn his back on God." To many literal people such sayings are stumbling-

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blocks. They must be taken as "truth on the half-shell," else are they positively mischievous.

Every teacher and leader of men who speaks with brave sincerity about the abuses of wealth, and other abuses on the part of those having power and influence, has the devil appear to him in the guise of friend or foe warning against straight speech, lest it bring loss of money, position, friendship, — loss of this, that, or the other personal advantage. More than once, I doubt not, Jesus heard the caution, —"Look out, my young man; you will make yourself very unpopular. Believe as you like. In private speak for yourself: but in public speak for others."

The caution served, once at least, to call from Jesus one of his most striking paradoxes, promulgating a sentiment contrary to that in general acceptance, but profoundly true nevertheless. *They* warn *him* against the danger of unpopularity: *he* warns *them* against the danger of *popularity*. "Woe unto you when

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all men shall speak well of you! for in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets."

In similar vein spoke the Chinese sage, Confucius: "When the multitude hate a man, it is necessary to examine into the case. When the multitude like a man, it is necessary to examine into the case." So also said a Greek, something like this: "When I am popular I am afraid of myself."

Did Jesus sometimes feel as did Carlyle when he wrote to Emerson: "If the Devil will be pleased to set all the popularities against you, . . . perhaps that is of all things the very kindest any Angel can do"?

In these days of much shallow shouting of "*Vox populi, vox Dei*," it might be salutary for politicians to wear in public the above sayings, after the fashion of the ancient Jews who used to go to worship with bands of scripture on their person.

A Jewish proverb says, "If the people wish to silence a man they must stop his mouth

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with broth." But here was a man, a prophet of Israel indeed, whose mouth could not be stopped by broth, nor by fear of unpopularity, nor by fear of losing life itself. Tempted by the affectionate but timid Peter, his heroic passion for truth and right gave vent to the most astounding rebuke in history, and the profoundest of all his paradoxes: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. . . . Whosoever would save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, for my sake and the gospel's, shall save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? or what should a man give in exchange for his soul?" "Be not afraid of those who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

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VI

Opposition and Quotation

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A great man quotes bravely, and will not draw on his invention when his memory serves him with a word as good. . . . Genius borrows nobly. When Shakespeare is charged with debts to his authors, Landor replies: "Yet he was more original than his originals. He breathed upon dead bodies, and brought them into life." . . . Wordsworth, as soon as he heard a good thing, caught it up, meditated upon it, and very soon reproduced it in his conversation and writing. If De Quincey said, "That is what I told you," he replied, "No: that is mine,—mine, and not yours." On the whole, we like the valor of it. . . . It betrays the consciousness that truth is the property of no individual, but is the treasure of all men. —*Emerson.*

People are always talking about originality, but what do they mean? As soon as we are born the world begins to work upon us; and this goes on to the end. . . . If I could give an account of all that I owe to great predecessors and contemporaries, there would be but a small balance in my favor.

—*Goethe.*

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VI

Opposition and Quotation

"Have ye not read in your Bible?"—Jesus.

REPEATED reading of the gospel narratives has touched in me more and more the dramatic sense. I follow the fortunes of a hero whose swing is ever more heroic as the scenes shift on — under the laws of growth, a spiritual hero; speech taking form and color from meditation sad and solitary, and from enlarging experience with men and their ways.

Thus far we have not seen him on unfriendly terms with the established and orthodox sects of his day. For a while he was welcome to speak in the synagogues, invited to social

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gatherings at the houses of the Pharisees, — looked upon no doubt by the latter as a promising young man whom it would be very desirable to keep within the fold. Like great reformers in general, political or religious, it was his hope at first to regenerate society at large by working in unison with the old organization. Gradually, however, irreconcilable differences are made manifest.

The instructions of "time and tide" force him to look upon the leaders of the Pharisees, and of the opposite party to them, the Sadducees, as "blind guides," wily, and cunning in resource. To meet them, how does he equip himself? Surely, not with the heavy and juiceless learning of the Jewish schools; for this too often petrified the man — after the fashion of the average divinity school, which Theodore Parker described in his sharp sarcasm: "It used to take the Egyptians seven years to make a mummy out of a dead man; but it only takes Harvard Divinity School three years to make a mummy out of

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a live man." Happily the sarcasm has much less point now respecting that particular institution.

Of foreign lore, Greek or Hindu, Jesus seems to have known but little; though some floating fragments of the literatures and religions of other peoples, East and West, may have lodged with him during all those years concerning which the gospels are strangely silent. Not from these sources then did his equipment come; but rather from self-reliant reflection, swift intuition, and a goodly understanding of the Law and the Prophets which his opponents expounded as authority in religion and morals.

An interesting phase of his wit and humor in dealing with opposition lies in his use of apt quotations from the Old Testament. Sometimes these are applied to himself, sometimes to the age in which he lives, sometimes to certain classes of his countrymen. Thus, recognizing in the multitude those afflicted with gross and willful blind-

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ness, he represents them as fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, —

"By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand;
And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive.
For this people's heart is waxed gross,
And their eyes they have closed;
Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart,
And should turn again,
And I should heal them."

The opponents of Jesus were very strenuous for the local and external elements of their religion, while he valued the elements universal and internal. They made great pretensions to a knowledge of the Law of Moses, and to a veneration for the word of the fathers. For that reason, and because he was made to feel their proud and underrating attitude toward him, it need not seem strange to think of his having a certain satisfaction in turning

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their own scripture against them. At any rate, when they came with carping questions and accusations, he had ready the acknowledged Word. Not that the Word was authority with him above the progressive private soul, the original source of the Word, but that they, at least in theory, had so made it themselves.

Do they complain that he or his disciples transgress the Law or some tradition of the elders, straightway come from him citations to show *them* the real offenders in much weightier matters: "Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you doeth it?"

To adjust it to the changing conditions and tastes of the people, the original Mosaic Law had been twisted by ingenious interpretation of the scribes until it became in many respects practically of no effect. Sometimes this was for the better, sometimes for the worse. Layer after layer of tradition accumulated, prescribing one or another ceremonial triviality. On behalf of the tradition, Jesus was

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peremptorily asked why his disciples ate bread "with defiled hands," that is, without observing the elders' rites of purification before meals. Jesus makes no defense, but becomes the accuser himself: "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition." [Some rabbi even declared, "The words of the scribes are more noble than the words of the Law."] "For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and he that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death; but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God, ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother [under pretext of helping the church you deprive the parent of rightful support], making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered; and many such like things ye do." *

Touching the word Corban, Luther, with

* Matt. 15, 1–20; Mark 7, 5–23.

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characteristic sarcasm, remarked, "As much as to say, Dear father, I would willingly give it [the offering] to thee, but it is Corban: I count it better to give it to God than to thee, and it will help thee better."

Having put his complainants in the above undesirable light before the people, Jesus said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth"; because "things which proceed out of the mouth come out of the heart: evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness; all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man." . . . "Well did Isaiah prophesy of these hypocrites:

"'This people honoreth me with their lips;
Yet their heart is far from me;
But in vain do they worship me,
Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.'"

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Withdrawing to one side with his disciples, he is told that the Pharisees were offended at his saying. But he answers back: "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides, and if the blind guide the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch?"

On being repeatedly questioned in public by his antagonists, Jesus saw fit, on one occasion at least, to take the offensive. He did so in the important matter of the long-expected Messiah, as whom, in some quarters, he had come to be regarded. Perhaps he desired to supplant the general aristocratic notion of the divinity of kings, and the superiority of royal lineation, by the democratic notion that the Messiah might spring from the loins of the common people, and not of necessity be a descendant of David, as the Pharisees and scribes especially maintained.

Be that as it may, he asked them, "What

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think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?" Getting the anticipated reply, "The son of David," he quotes against them the Psalms, which all parties accepted as the veritable utterances of that king. "How then doth David in the spirit call him Lord, saying, —

"'The Lord said unto my Lord,
Sit thou on my right hand,
Until I put thine enemies underneath thy feet'?

If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son?"

Concerning the Mosaic Law touching the matter of divorce, some of the rabbis had interpreted it, after a very lax fashion, to the disfavor of woman. Even the good Hillel (preceding Jesus by only a few years) declared it sufficient cause for divorce that the wife had burned her husband's dinner, or perchance had made it too salty — the husband of course being the judge.

Very loose indeed had public sentiment become when the Pharisees undertook to trip

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the Galilean on this question. "Is it lawful," they ask, "for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" * And he makes answer by referring to the Pentateuch:

"Have ye not read that He which made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh? What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

To this the questioners not inaptly rejoin, "Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?" They seemed to have drawn him into an inconsistency; but he wisely and wittily turns the edge of the second question with the reply:

"Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it hath not been so." In other words, Moses, like every practical lawgiver, was constrained to adjust his laws to the

* Matt. 19, 3–8; Mark 10, 1–9.

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social conditions and moral development of his people. Not his laxity, but the laxity of the fathers, made the laxity of the Law. The reply is in the vein of the response made by Solon when questioned as to whether he had given the best laws to the Athenians. He wisely answered, "I have given them the best they were able to bear." It was also in this spirit of wise expediency that Lincoln wrote to a friend, "Die when I may, I want it said of me by those who know me best that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower when I thought a flower would grow."

Somewhat embarrassing and nettling to his adversaries is Jesus' way of turning on them with the remark, "Have ye not read in your Bible that — ?" and so forth; or, "Ye do err, not knowing the scripture"; sometimes adding, "nor the power of God." Embarrassing and nettling, because they especially plumed themselves on being authority in these very matters. When they show irritation at the enthusiastic hosannas shouted in the temple

this word suggested here by use of thistle just above.

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even by the children, he asks with somewhat provoking serenity, "Did ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" On being threatened with stoning for the mystical saying, "I and the Father are one," he coolly says, "Many good works have I showed you from the Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" And when they reply, "It is because, being a man, he makes himself God," he asks again, "Is it not written in your Law, I said ye are gods?"

How trenchant and deep plough the rejoinders of Jesus concerning the observance of the Sabbath! On the charge being preferred that his disciples profaned that day by plucking ears of corn, he instantly cuts off controversy by simply reminding the complainants that the accused did but follow a precedent made by their most venerated king, and even by the priests themselves.

"Have ye not read what David did when he was hungered? . . . how he entered into

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the house of God, and did eat the sacred shew-bread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests?" Or, "Have ye not read, in the Law, how on the Sabbath-day the priests in the temple [by their sacrifices] profane the Sabbath, and are guiltless?" They complain of his healing on the Sabbath, and he rejoins that to keep the Law of Moses they inflict on little children on the Sabbath the barbarous rite of circumcision; "and shall I not make the sick every whit whole? Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." *

On one occasion, when ministering to a woman, he indignantly asks the objectors, "You hypocrites, does not each one of you loose his ox or ass from the crib, and water him, on the Sabbath-day? And shall not this daughter of Abraham be loosed [from her infirmity] on the Sabbath-day?" At another time, the case being that of a man, he asks if

* Matt. 12, 1–6.

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they had an ox or a sheep fall into a pit on the Sabbath, whether they would not straightway draw him out? Taking silence for consent, the conclusion follows: "How much, then, is a man of more value than a sheep!" Again he asks, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath-day to do good, or to do harm? to save life, or destroy it?"

Apropos of the above pertinent questions of Jesus, there is an interesting passage in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, which book, in the Council of Nice, failed by a vote or two to become sacred. Pilate, in taking the testimony respecting the accusation made against Jesus, asks certain witnesses, "Why have the Jews a mind to kill Jesus?" Being answered, "They are angry because he wrought cures on the Sabbath-day," Pilate sarcastically retorts, "Will they kill him for a good work?"

With what sharp logic the Galilean deals with conventional objections, so as to bring a universal principle of common sense and

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common humanity to govern in the use of the Sabbath! Talk of profaning the temple: "One greater than the temple is here. But if ye had known what this meaneth, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is lord of the Sabbath." Or, still stronger, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

"Inspired common sense" is the mother of such wit.

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VII

Miracles; Practical Religion

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Men will not see that miracle is a perception of the soul; a vision of the Divine behind Nature; a psychical crisis, analogous to that of Æneas on the last day of Troy, which reveals to us the heavenly powers prompting and directing human action. Their passion for the facts which are objective, isolated, and past, prevents them from seeing the facts which are eternal and spiritual. They can only adore what comes to them from without. As soon as their dramaturgy is interpreted symbolically all seems to them lost. They must have their local prodigies — their vanished unverifiable miracles, because for them the divine is there and only there. —*Amiel.*

Let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous. In this the children of God are manifest: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. —*John.*

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VII

Miracles; Practical Religion

"The desire to perform miracles arises either from covetousness or from vanity." "What is more wondrous, more mysterious, more miraculous than Amitabha [that is, light or truth]?"

—THE BUDDHA.

"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. . . . Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world."

—JAMES.

ONE of the most invincible obstacles to the acceptance of Jesus by the people was their craving for miracles. He had satisfied them very well in reference to healing certain diseases, for the successful treatment of which, it is quite believable, his transcend-

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ent spiritual nature eminently fitted him. But they wanted further manifestation of power for wonder-working. This gives significance to the saying of Jesus, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe"; and to Paul's independent and discriminative remark, "Jews ask for a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom."

To teach spiritual truth, and demonstrate it with a life to match, — for the Jewish multitude this was not sufficient. For the multitude, is it ever sufficient? The truth-loving Buddha, vexed by this disposition, forbade his disciples to cater to it, and applied the term "miracle-mongers" to those who did. The enemies of Jesus did not fail to take advantage of it and press him in several ways to prove his Messianic mission by such material evidence. Once he puts them off with the pregnant utterance, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you."

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Disappointed in getting an answer not good for campaign purposes, they come at him, another time, with a more specific request. They ask him to show them a sign from heaven, and he turns on them sharply: —

"When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering. Ye know how to discern the face of the sky; but ye cannot discern the signs of the time. An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." *

I like the form in which this reply is given in Luke 12, 54–57. It may have been spoken thus differently on different occasions:

"When ye see a cloud rising in the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it cometh to pass. And when ye see a south wind blowing, ye say, There will be a scorching heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heavens; but how is it

* Matt. 16, 1–4.

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that ye know not how to interpret this time [the spiritual signs of this age]? Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"

In the last chapter we saw how Jesus met the opposition of the Pharisees to his healing on the Sabbath-day. Now, this opposition sprang not more out of their stricter Sabbatarian views than out of envy of his greater success in the exercise of a power they themselves claimed. That Pilate probably believed this, one may infer, especially from the book before mentioned, the Gospel of Nicodemus. Therein it is related that the enemies of the Nazarene admitted that he cast out devils, and that this called from the Roman the sneer, "Why are not the devils subject to your doctors?" Their attitude, and also the attitude of some among the disciples, was like that of certain healers of the present day toward other healers not working under their name, — an attitude, surely, not in the spirit of the master. When complaint was made to him that somebody outside the fold was

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casting out devils in his name, he simply replied, "Forbid him not; for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. He that is not against us is for us."

How much better it had been for the Pharisees if they had spoken as wisely of Jesus. But no, they made the foolish and unfortunate charge, "This man doth not cast out devils except by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Unfortunate, indeed; for, with the most nimble wit, the young preacher forges out of their own logic the following unerring boomerang:

"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against itself shall not stand. If Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? And if by Beelzebub I cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of

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God come upon you. Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth."

It was Lincoln's application of the words "A house divided against itself shall not stand" that had more to do with making him President of these United States than any other utterance of his life. They supplanted Seward's "irrepressible conflict," good as it was. Lincoln read his Bible and Shakespeare, and they determined his style beyond all other books. It were well for oratory and wit if more of our public men imitated him in this respect. It is deplorable, the ignorance of this generation respecting the Bible, even as literature.

In Jesus' crushing reply as given above, he does not stop; he follows it up with a charge of blasphemy "against the Holy Spirit," in that they have, through sheer envy, ascribed

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what they admit to be good works to the Devil himself. *That* sin "shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor the world to come." Be consistent; "either make the tree good, and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit. Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his treasure bringeth forth good things; and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. . . . By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." *

The chief priests and elders were all the more envious of the growing influence of the teacher from Galilee because he held no commission from any divinity school or ecclesiastical body. On one occasion, likely with an overbearing and impertinent manner, they accosted him, "By what authority doest thou

* Matt. 12, 25–37; Luke 11, 14–24.

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these things?" Jesus must have thought, "You assumed depositaries of truth! what right have you to catechise me as though a prisoner up for judgment?" They touch in him the just pride of self-respect, and spring the spring of wit which catches them in a trap:

"I will ask of you one question, which if you answer, I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John, — whence was it? from heaven or from men? answer me."

"And they reasoned with themselves" [so runs the account], "If we shall say, From heaven, he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we say, From men, we fear the multitude" [or, in Luke, "all the people will stone us"]: "for all hold John as a prophet." The only refuge left them was the confession of ignorance: "We know not," which in their case was especially humiliating. *

* Matt. 21, 23–28; Mark 11, 27–33; Luke 20, 1–8.

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It is a most commanding aspect of the genius of the Galilean prophet that, in coping with captious questioners, he used his victorious wit so as to inculcate supreme ethical and spiritual truth. A wonderful example of this is that parable of the Good Samaritan, strangely enough reported only in Luke. We can hardly fail to taste the flavor of fine satire in the telling form of the contrast drawn between his own sentiment of universal brotherhood and the provincial, sectarian sentiment dominating the Jewish Church and State. The lawyer appears on the scene probably not so much for earnest truth-seeking as to entangle the teacher and justify his own religious affiliation.

Under these conditions he himself is made to answer the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" "You are a lawyer: how readest thou?" Then follows the citation from Deuteronomy and Leviticus (possibly repeated by Jesus), "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and

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with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself!"

The serene dignity with which are pronounced the words, "This do and thou shalt live," wounds the self-love of the lawyer. Hoping to appear to better advantage before his fellows, he pushes his questioning further. "Who is my neighbor?"

Then, as if an inspiration, — like the gushing forth of a fresh spring of water, — comes the parable: "A certain man, a Jew, was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side." [The priest, on whom was specially laid the obligation to minister unto the suffering, would not tarry even to save the life of a fellow-countryman, if he happened not to be of his fold in religion. Here, under cover of a fictitious individ-

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ual, censure is aimed at a class. In this vein Jesus proceeds.] "In like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw the wounded man, passed by on the other side." [The Levite stood next to the priest, consecrated by the supposed Law of Moses to services in God's temple. And now follows the climax of this satire, in its implied condemnation of the hard and exclusive attitude of the lawyer's sect. Hated and despised as the Samaritans were, the master yet selects one of them, a common layman at that, to embody the true spirit of religion — the spirit opposite to that evinced by the Jewish priest and the Levite.] "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed that way, came where he was, and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion." [What deeps of divine-human love lie in this favorite phrase of the Christman!] "He was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his beast, and brought him to an inn, and

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took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, I will, when I come again, repay thee. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor to him that fell among the robbers?"

The only answer admissible condemns the Jewish scribe and his sect. But how can the lawyer speak the detestable word, Samaritan? He cannot. Like Macbeth's "amen," it sticks in his throat. He is driven, however, to say the equivalent thing, in the reply, "He that shewed mercy on him." To one afflicted with pride and self-righteousness his dismissal had no relish in it—"Go, and do thou likewise." *

In this connection may be placed the so-called parable of the Last Judgment, in the sense that it expounds by humorous contrast the same fundamental truth that brotherly service is of the essence of real religion, and

* Luke 10, 25–37.

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the pass-key to the heavenly city. The strokes of original genius lie in this vivid picture of the two opposite sorts of people brought to judgment before the king of righteousness, — the professing people and the doing people; those who live to be ministered unto, and those who live to minister. The king says "unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer, and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch

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as ye did it unto one of these, my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

Then follow the antithetical verses, which much enhance the impressiveness of the thought: Ye on the left, depart from me accursed: "for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me." *

In admitting this parable among his illustrations, has the writer hereof furnished opportunity for some Sir-Oracle on Biblical authorship to smile the smile of pity or contempt? "What! does the man not know that I have

* Matt. 25, 33–45.

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tried and sentenced these passages to be not the utterances of Jesus any more forever?" Yes, the man does know; and yet the impression obstinately abides with him that it is possible Sir-Oracle, in this case, has made a mistake. Possible it is that a too literal interpretation of this picturesque parable has caused not alone the theological commentators of the old school to stumble, but some of the "higher critics" of the new school. The latter, as well as the former, can be literalists and "blind guides." We may write Spurious across the after-the-fact prophecies in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew; and Spurious across some portions of the twenty-fifth. We may also say of the parable in question, Perhaps it was somewhat tampered with to give expression to a certain feeling of intolerance manifested in the early Christian Church. But the unique enforcement it makes of the Nazarene's dominant idea of salvation by service, in the sharp distinction (true to-day as ever) which it draws between the self-

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seeking goat-element in society and the others-seeking sheep-element — this unique contrast shall have place here as the probable, legitimate child of Jesus' imaginative humor.

To pass upon this parable as a specific statement of theological belief is as irrational as it will be for one who shall live a thousand or more years hence to interpret after the same literal fashion certain parables of the present age. Take, for instance, our current Saint-Peter-at-the-gate parables, in which the two types of people, the professional pietist and dogmatist and the unpretentious doer of practical righteousness, are set over against one another. Both knock at the gate of the heavenly city. Saint Peter asks for their credentials, the result being, as good sense dictates, that the gate is always shut against the former class, and opened with due alacrity for the latter. What modern preacher or platform-speaker soever has thought of using these parables as belonging to other than the category of figurative humor? And is it so very

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unlikely that the greatest among preachers used in similar manner this so-called parable of the Last Judgment? — used it in some sermon on practical religion, directed against those who profess much and do little? Its vitalizing thought, namely, that ministration unto the suffering sons of men, even unto the least of them, is ministration to God and the sign and seal of the discipleship of Jesus — this thought has inspired many fine lines from the poets, both humorous and pathetic.

Looked at more from the view-point of humor, and less from that of theology, may not several of the parables cast into the category of the probably spurious be brought back into that of the probably genuine? Even the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus may be one of these. Under its cover we can think of Jesus reproaching a certain class among the aristocratic and wealthy, — most likely the Sadducees, who were conspicuous for their selfish luxury, their proud contempt for the

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common people, and their general skepticism.

At the latter temper of mind is the conclusion aimed. When the rich man tells Abraham that his five brothers will repent if only some one should be allowed to go to them from the dead, the reply is, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."

True conversion must be inward, by the grace of truth itself, not outward, by the miraculous — by visitation of ghosts, or otherwise.

The parable of the two men building their houses, the one on rock, the other on sand, furnishes, along with the sheep-and-goat parable, another positive distinction between those who practise and those who do not practise the truths they hear and pretend to believe. This parable, and the remarks leading up to it, have also elements of serious humor.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord,

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Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." The speaker then describes the people of creed rather than deed, who join the procession after the kingdom gets well under headway, and take great credit to themselves for professing the faith. "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew *you:* depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Every one therefore who heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon the rock. And every one who heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and

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smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof." Whatever the appearances to the contrary, you are playing the part of this foolish man, if you are building on any other basis than the marriage of religion to life.

Some Persian king, I think it was, in these words emphasized religion as the basis of good government: "Every building which possesseth not a sound foundation is quickly overthrown, and every house which possesseth no keeper is speedily despoiled."

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VIII

Vanquished Craft

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He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. —*Job.*

He is the Answerer,
What can be answer'd he answers, and what cannot be answer'd he shows how it cannot be answer'd.
A man is a summons and challenge,
(It is vain to skulk — do you hear that mocking and laughter? do you hear the ironical echoes?)
Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action, pleasure, pride, beat up and down seeking to give satisfaction,
He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat up and down also. —*Walt Whitman.*

He that can answer a question so as to admit of no further answer is the best man. —*Emerson.*

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VIII

Vanquished Craft

"The chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft."—MARK.

"No man after that durst ask him any question."
—MARK.

IT became more and more evident that the standard of truth and life set up by Jesus was irreconcilable with the standard maintained by the more influential and conservative in religion, and in politics also. They recognized in the young Galilean preacher a personal force dangerous to their supposed interests. His enemies multiplied, not merely because of his religious protestation, but partly because there was in his teachings a spirit of protest also against certain unjust

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economic and social relations existing among his countrymen.

Completer records, I doubt not, would make this more apparent. To the aristocratic and favored classes he became no less obnoxious than were Garrison, Sumner and other brave leaders of the Abolition movement to the American Slavocracy of the South. To them he bore the front of a radical of the radicals, which indeed he was — a front not at all pleasant to those in league with special privileges and "organized hypocrisy" in Church and State. To paraphrase another's saying, — Well might they beware when God let loose *this* thinker on the planet. He was not mortgaged to the powerful and wealthy by any fear of losing position and salary, or by any craving for worldly advancement. Quite another mission was his than delivering dilettante essays on sin and virtue in the abstract. He made preaching a personal matter to the hearer; he convicted not only man in general, but some men in particular,

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and not more a past, dead generation than his own present, living generation. Right specifically he sometimes said to the worker of iniquity, as the prophet Nathan said to King David, —"Thou art the man."

As the "irrepressible conflict" grew more irrepressible, the enemies of the divine Commoner sought in more deliberate ways to entrap him into disfavor with the people. Instances of the swift and matchless play of his wit to extricate himself and turn the tables against the enemy probably occurred which have not gotten into the record. Sadducees, Herodians, scribes and Pharisees, all have their unsuccessful bouts with him.

One of the puzzles which the materialistic, sneering Sadducees gave him for solution was the hypothetical case of a widow surviving the death of seven husbands, all of whom were brothers. Although themselves not believing in the future life, they ask Jesus the question, "In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had

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her." They hoped, I suppose, to get from him an answer as clumsy as that made to this same question by some of the Pharisees: the latter had maintained that she would be the wife of the first husband. Not so. He simply turned the scripture against their unbelief, and taught a more spiritual conception than theirs of love and the future life; one like unto what Plato or Emerson, under similar circumstances, might have taught. "Ye do err, not knowing the scripture, nor the power of God. The sons of this world marry and are given in marriage; but they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage: for they are as angels in heaven." Then he asks these materialists if they have not read in their own scripture, "that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? Now, he is not the God of the dead, but of the living." *

* Matt. 22, 27–33; Luke 20, 27–38.

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To their credit, the Pharisees were more patriotic and earnest than the Sadducees; but they were also more positive and crafty in their opposition to the Galilean reformer. In order to put him in bad odor either with the Romans, or with his own countrymen, they connived (according to Matthew and Mark) even with their hated enemies, the Herodians. Joining forces with the latter they sought Jesus out, and, with insulting flattery, opened on him in this fashion: "Master, we know that thou art true, and carest not for any one: for thou regardest not the person of man, but of a truth teachest the way to God. Tell us, therefore, is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? Shall we give or shall we not give?"

A most cunningly framed question this: for it demanded an answer which, if it should be Yes, would deeply offend the national prejudices of his people, and so destroy the influence he had gained with them as a prophet; and if it should be No, would place

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him in great danger of apprehension by the Roman government for political treason. We have it from Luke that he was actually accused before Pilate of "forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar." At any rate, the previous experience of Jesus with this sort of craftiness had prepared him to apply to these oily pretenders the severe epithet they fully merited.

Some friend of Lincoln has recorded that he never saw him look positively handsome but once, and that was when he was angry, — righteously angry. I fancy a flush of divine indignation glorifying the face of Jesus as he exclaims, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Bring me the tribute-money. Whose is this image and superscription?"

"Cæsar's."

Momentarily, perhaps, scorn flashes in his eye, as the words burst forth with radical stress, "Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's"; then rising above scorn to a sublime consciousness of the debtor relation of all men to one Father,

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he adds, "and unto God the things that are God's."

The reply must have struck upon the enemy's ear like the unexpected discharge of a gun. It pierced the heart of the matter, a grand triumph of intellectual adroitness and spiritual insight over worldly outsight and cunning.

But of all the victories of Jesus over those who endeavored to ensnare him, none are quite so dramatic and impressive as the victory recorded in the first eleven verses of the eighth chapter of "John." Touching the sin of the adulterous woman, the Roman law was more lenient, and more in general favor with the Jews themselves, than the Mosaic. In application the rabbis had modified the rigor of the latter, and the teachings of Jesus were distinctly of a milder cast. When, therefore, the Pharisees and scribes reminded him that the law of Moses required an adulteress to be stoned to death, and put the question, — "What, then, sayest thou of her?" — the

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intent was again to hedge him in a double dilemma. They hoped, as in springing the question of the tribute-money, that he would side either for the Mosaic law or the Roman law, or else that he would raise an issue between the strict constructionists of the Mosaic law and the lax constructionists. Pronouncing for the strict constructionists he would go counter to rabbis of high authority, and to the inclinations of the people as a whole. Moreover, he would be charged with contradicting himself as the teacher of a more humane doctrine. On the other hand, pronouncing for the lax constructionists, he would offend what may be called the Puritan element among the Jews. The charge then would be, "Thou hast gone against scripture, and against Moses himself." In case, however, he avoided these issues, there yet remained the expectation that he would lay down, on his own authority, a new rule of practice, and so appear to be setting himself above the Roman law, the Mosaic law, and the rulings of the rabbis.

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Surely, they thought, he must answer so as to bring himself into disrepute with some important class of his countrymen.

In such a complicated dilemma as this, is it not quite supposable that even the swift intellect of Jesus required a moment or so to consider how to deal with his crafty enemies? He stooped down, and drew marks on the earth, while he framed a reply the wisest, wittiest, kindest possible to the situation.

Right marvelous encounter this, between the sons of darkness and the son of light! Around about stand the people, wondering what he will say. Within the circle, somewhat nearer the master, wait his disciples in breathless anxiety, both hopeful and fearful of the result. In the center stands the woman, frightened and trembling, scarlet-faced in her shame, — guilty of the charge against her, no doubt as to that. Close upon Jesus, — eyes involuntarily gleaming hatred, faces advertising exultant expectation of victory this time, — close upon him, in his sup-

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posed confusion, his adversaries press their cunning question, "What sayest thou?"

They have full opportunity to be secretly exultant. Then slowly he raises himself, and, with all commanding gravity, and insight into the infirmity of man in general, — perhaps of these men in particular, — he answers, "He that is without sin among *you*, let him first cast a stone at *her*."

To one of highly sympathetic imagination it is painful to see even an enemy put to confusion by a stinging retort, though that enemy has justly merited it by some malicious question of his own. The sensitive, responsive Jesus feels the pain of the questioners himself. No resentful exultation detracts from the glory of his victory. Magnanimously he spares them further embarrassment: stooping again he marks on the ground while they have time to slink away.

Were they dressed in ecclesiastical robes — these self-righteous dignitaries? Then the more chagrined, as slowly and sneakingly they

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move out before the staring (some grinning) witnesses to their defeat.

The accusers themselves convicted by an answer implying a truth universal and immortal, how now shall he deal with the accused? Shall he mete out harsh censure to this guilty, trembling woman? or shall he excuse her crime? Verily, neither. Magnanimous again, Jesus condemns not; but with a bearing toward her in tone of voice, in words full of sad and gracious rebuke, the most effectual to insure reform, he gravely charges her, "Go thy way: from henceforth sin no more."

It is no special wonder that, to the ascetic temper prevailing at one time in the Christian communities, this anecdote cast reflection on the master of religion and morals. It seemed to encourage a view too lax respecting a sin which, in the Eastern Church at least, made a member who was guilty of it amenable to severe discipline. Hence, it is thought, the story was excluded by the authors of the earlier, or synoptic, gospels. Hence, also, it

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may be, its rejection by a considerable number of Biblical scholars. Whether originally included even in the book of "John" or not, I unhesitatingly accept it as an actual fact in the life of the same capacious and compassionate soul who said in the house of Simon to the repentant Magdalen at his feet: "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." Subjectively considered, no account of the Nazarene's trials of wit bears any more genuine stamp than this story of the adulterous woman. Sublime demonstration of his elevated mind and character, to me it is true to the core of it. You son of "sweetness and light," what power was yours of invincible wit to baffle the wiles of wily men! How fittingly, on occasions many, might you have flung at the enemy these lines of a Greek tragedy:

> "O shameless one all daring, weaving still
> Some crafty scheme from every righteous word,
> Why triest thou again?"

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IX

Hypocrisy and Self-Righteousness

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Jesus addresses himself always to the delicacy of the moral sentiment. . . . His exquisite irony, his arch provocations, always struck to the heart. Eternal darts, they remain fixed in the wound. The Nessus-shirt of ridicule was woven by Jesus with divine art. Masterpieces of lofty raillery, his traits are written in lines of fire upon the flesh of the hypocrite and the pretended devotee. Incomparable traits, traits worthy of a Son of God! Thus, a God alone can kill. Socrates and Moliere but graze the skin. He carries fire and madness into the marrow of the bones.

—*Renan.*

Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible, except to God alone,
By his permissive will, through heav'n and earth.

—*Milton.*

Two went to pray? Oh! rather say,
One went to brag, the other to pray.

One stands up close, and treads on high,
Where the other dares not lend his eye.

One nearer to God's altar trod;
The other to the altar's God.

—*Richard Crashaw.*

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IX

Hypocrisy and Self-Righteousness

"*I know not seems.*"—HAMLET.

"*As the religious sentiment is the most real and earnest thing in nature, . . . the vitiating this is the greatest lie. Therefore, the oldest gibe in literature is the ridicule of false religion.*"

—EMERSON.

THE wise teachers of the race have ever extolled sincerity as a central jewel in the crown of virtue. It so lies at the root of true manhood and the power of ministration unto men that Confucius declared it to be "the beginning and end of things." "The way of heaven and earth is without any doubleness."

Sincerity being held in such high esteem,

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no other type of sinner has been more satirized and ridiculed than the hypocrite. Of his special vice, Montaigne, frankest of skeptics, has remarked, "I find none that does evidence so much of baseness and meanness of spirit." So mean that Hugo has said, "Its odiousness is obscurely felt by the hypocrite himself." "The elements of his body will laugh within him," declares an ancient Hindu. How mercilessly Rabelais, Voltaire and Hugo, Carlyle, Thackeray and Dickens have painted him as an object of reprobation! What a searching dissection is the painting of the character of Judge Pyncheon, in the "House of the Seven Gables"; of Captain Clubin, in the "Toilers of the Sea"; still better, of the oily Pecksniff, in "Martin Chuzzlewit"! A right true friend of the sincerities is the ironical picture of this Pecksniff riding on a cold day, with his warm wraps about him, thanking God that he was better off than other men. "A very beautiful arrangement, to feel in keen weather that many other people are not as warm as

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you are. For if every one were warm and well fed, we should lose the satisfaction of admiring the fortitude with which certain conditions of men bear cold and hunger. And if we were no better off than anybody else, what would become of our sense of gratitude? which, says Mr. Pecksniff, with tears in his eyes, as he shook his fist at a beggar who wanted to get up behind, is one of the holiest feelings of our common nature."

"Hypocritical piety is double iniquity," as the proverb says. It dupes the multitude, and masks a moral leprosy contaminating the individual's whole nature. Therefore the generous lovers of men do generously hate cant and hypocrisy. Jesus hated them also. No other form of vice aroused in him such aversion. The detection of its existence among the more influential classes drew from his intellectual quiver his sharpest arrows.

The hypocrite not unfrequently pretends to the greater virtue by his severer censure of the frailties of others. Against such Jesus

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warned his disciples, saying, "Judge not, lest ye be judged. For with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite! first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Now comes a shaft for spectacular piety and charity. "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them; else you have no reward of your Father. When, therefore, thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogue and in the street, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward. But when thou doest alms, let

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not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." *

Let us rejoice at the progress of the latter days. We have finer agencies now than synagogue and street for publishing our charities. We have only to whisper them to the reporter, and the newspaper takes them into every home. So solemnly we read on Sunday, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth"; so eagerly we print on Monday what both hands do!

"Moreover," continues Jesus, "when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces [assume a dismal expression], that they may be seen of men to fast." . . . "And when ye pray [or worship], ye shall not be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues, and in the corners of the street, that they may be seen of men. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father

* Matt. 7, 1–5; Luke 6, 37–42.

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who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." There is satire in the repetition of the phrases, "to be seen of men," and "verily, they have their reward." Observe, too, his censure of long and detailed prayers: "In praying, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not, therefore, like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." *

Alas, in this matter of prayer the heathen, more than Jesus, find imitation yet in many Christian pulpits. The petitions sent up come nigh unto blasphemy, so much do they imply that God does not know that he knows — that he needs instruction and reminding in the mysterious business of governing the universe.

Commenting on the foregoing utterances of Jesus, a great Biblical critic exclaims: "With what a masterly hand he throws off in a few

* Matt. 6, 1–18.

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rapid touches these brief but living portraitures! A holy satire on every school or fashion that makes religion a coat to put on, a part to study, a thing of outward show. Can we not see that friend of the poor who is so proud of his charitable disposition, but prouder still of his reputation for it? Can we not see the punctual devotee who goes to the synagogue every day to say his prayers, but is not displeased should the hour sometimes overtake him in the street, especially at a much-frequented spot? — then he stops short and offers up his long petition where he stands, while the passers-by turn aside in reverence and lower their voices to a whisper! Can we not see that saintly ascetic, with his head bowed down and strewed with ashes, with his unkempt hair and beard and his penitential garb? The people point to him in wonder, and say, Fasting again! What a man he is! He never spares himself!"

"A man may smile and smile and be a villain." Jesus was forced to see how possible

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this was to some of the men with whom he had to deal; and he denounced them as "whited sepulchers, outwardly beautiful, but inwardly full of dead men's bones." "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk about in long robes, and love salutations in the markets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the first places at feasts; who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive the greater damnation."

> "With devotion's visage
> And pious action we do sugar o'er
> The devil himself."

Jesus always goes from the outward action to the inward motive, from seeming to being. With Hamlet he could say, "I know not seems."

The scene of the widow's mite, both in Mark and Luke, happily follows the denunciation of the devourers of "widows' houses." When he saw the rich casting into the church-

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treasury, more or less ostentatiously, he declared that the poor woman, giving her two mites, had "cast in more than they all; for they did of their superfluity cast in unto the gifts; but she of her want did cast in all the living that she had." As Jesus watched the givers, he now and then beheld one belonging to the class described by an English poet:

> "With one hand he put
> A penny in the urn of poverty,
> And with the other took a shilling out."

Listen again: "Beware of false prophets, who come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." The Romans had the proverb: "The wolf changes his coat, but not his disposition."

In Luke 18, 9–14, we have the climax of the Galilean's incisive satire on professional

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piety, sectarian pride, and self-righteousness: it comes in the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. He was inculcating the sweet virtue of humility, when he turned the hearers' "ears into eyes" with this bold and graphic portraiture of what Carlyle, in subtle paradox, calls "the sincere hypocrite":

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus within himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all I get." Now, how sharp and vivid the antithesis! "But the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I say unto you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The concluding words, as we have already

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seen, are reported to have been given also on a different occasion. They are fitting and effective in both connections. Who can tell what gestures, what play of the features, what glancings of the eye, what intonations of voice may have enhanced the ridicule in this incomparable picture of the two opposite and generic types of character therein set forth!

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Closing of the Conflict

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Christ, therefore, concentrates all his wrath upon the self-righteous Pharisee, the unfaithful leader of the unfaithful, who would neither enter heaven himself, nor allow others to enter. . . . He could bear any amount of unholiness, because he knew faith could cure that. But he could not bear the absence of faith, because what could be the cure of that? . . . The gentleness and sympathy of Jesus must not be confounded with weakness, timidity, and toleration of evil. He had gentle pity and forgiveness for the victims of mistake and passion, but the deliberate slaves of falsehood, faithlessness, and religious vanity are only fit for the fire and brimstone which Jesus hurled at them. —*Mozoomdar*

So let it be. In God's own might
We gird us for the coming fight,
And strong in Him whose cause is ours
In conflict with unholy powers,
We grasp the weapons He has given, —
The Light, and Truth, and Love of Heaven.
—*Whittier.*

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X

Closing of the Conflict

"Woe unto you!"
"And they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him."
"Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers."
—Jesus.

THE discovery that he has overrated the capacity or disposition of men to be raised from a lower to a higher plane of life — does this not make one of the saddest crosses of the teacher of the things of the spirit? Did it not make one of the saddest crosses of the Nazarene who was to be crucified? "Surely," one might fancy him communing with himself, "a message so sweet and reasonable ought to go at once to the mind and heart of man. But lo, how many find it neither sweet nor reasonable!"

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As the rejection of his Messiahship by his own countrymen in general, and the ruling classes in particular, was made more and more evident, the idea waxed strong upon him of substituting in their place the so-called heathen, who showed comparatively such gratifying readiness to accept him. In presenting this idea he came to indulge more freely in the parable of figurative satire. A fine example is that of the Supper and Invited Guests; though this parable may be regarded more genial in the humor of it than the other parables of the same class. As appears from Luke, it was probably delivered before the fatal visit to Jerusalem. It is given quite differently, in this book, from the form in Matthew, and is much the preferable:

"A certain man made a great supper; and invited a large number of guests. And when the time came he sent forth his servant to say to them who were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. But they all with one consent began to make excuse. One said, I have just

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bought a field, and I must go to look at it: I pray thee have me excused. Another said, I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I want to try them: I pray thee have me excused. A third said, I have married a wife; of course I cannot come." Fancy here one of those gracious smiles which used to enhance the fine humor in Emerson's public lectures. Perhaps the speaker recalled the passage in Deuteronomy 24, 5: "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife whom he hath taken."

Without enumerating any further excuses, the parable goes on to relate with what indignation the host receives them. The invitation to the Messianic kingdom being refused by "respectable" and prosperous Jews, owning farms, stock, and the like, salvation is proffered to the outcasts and the Gentiles. "Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the

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streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the servant said, Lord, what thou didst command is done, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out [of the city] into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

Before entering on his evangelism at Jerusalem, Jesus had witnessed much to weaken his earlier faith in the spiritual capacity and willingness of his countrymen; and all too much had he been subjected to irritating and crafty antagonisms. "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not." This was the thorn that rankled, and that provoked from him certain anathemas recorded in different parts of the gospel accounts, — as similar treatment had provoked their "Woe unto you" from other prophets before him. The blood

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of Israel's Great Rejected Ones flowed in his veins — the blood of those not given to hyper-refined toleration. In no other race than the Hebrew has the prophet been driven by such concentration of vision, such intensity of moral and religious passion. In the literature of this age, who answers to his type, unless it be Thomas Carlyle? Jesus only obeyed the law of the Jewish temperament when, to him, his rejection by his own countrymen made them seem worse than the heathen Ninevites; since the latter were open to conversion by the preaching of Jonah, as many of the Gentiles were open to conversion by the preaching of a far "greater than Jonah." "Even," he says, "as Jonah became a sign" [a teacher of truth and righteousness] "unto the Ninevites, so also shall the Son of man be unto this generation." Therefore "the men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here. The

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queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

Let not the passage which immediately follows in Matthew be passed unnoticed, though the meaning be not readily apprehended. It is one of the most keen and original of Jesus' thrusts at the Jewish hierarchy and its blind devotees. He seems to speak here with the feeling that certain of the preceding prophets, in some measure, had purged the temple of the State religion from "the unclean spirit" of spiritual deadness and unbelief; and with the feeling also that he himself at first had been received with favor. But the conviction grew strong that there was a fatal relapse into soulless formality and willful hostility toward a gospel of truth, righteousness and love. "The unclean spirit," he says, "when he is gone out of the man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest and finding it not.

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Then he saith, I will return into mine house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished [spiritual life departed]. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first. Even so shall it be unto this evil generation." *

When society reaches the extreme of hardened unbelief and immorality, then the founder of a new dispensation in government or religion is at hand. As before intimated, Jesus had had revealed to him in the smaller cities enough of hypocrisy, craft and resisting sensualism to work in him moral resentment. But it was within the walls of the sacred city of Jewdom that this resentment attained its culminating passion. At metropolitan centers social diseases appear in the most shocking and incurable form. There it is that the prophet meets with the most hopelessly wise

* Matt. 12, 40–45; Luke 11, 29–32.

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and dogmatic skepticism, the most withering and sneering cynicism, among the educated classes; the most debasing luxury and display of pride and vanity, on the part of the powerful and wealthy; the most offensive observance of caste, and the widest chasm between the top and bottom of the social fabric. So was it at Florence, when the people's sins made Savonarola, as he said, a prophet — a prophet whose Hebraic rebukes kindled the enmity which wove for him the martyr's shroud of fire. So was it at Geneva, when the austere Calvin applied a surgeon's knife to the vices of that city, and transformed it into a habitation of virtue. And so was it at the home of the Popes, when valiant Luther was staggered and incensed by the flagrant corruption and unbelief of the ecclesiastical keepers of religion. "There is a saying in Italy," he says, "which they make use of when they go to church: 'Come and let us conform to the popular error.'"

Much the same hardness of heart, immoral-

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ity and hypocrisy opened themselves up to Jesus at Jerusalem as opened themselves up to the German monk at Rome. According to a Jewish proverb, nine out of ten hypocrites of the world were to be found in the metropolis of "God's chosen people." Here the mechanism of worship was most mechanical, the sterility of spirit most sterile, the hardness of heart most hardened. Here his high instincts received their severest shock ; here enemies laid pitfalls for him and nagged him at every turn. Here was he pricked to the utterance of those most caustic parables and denunciations which precipitated the final catastrophe. Here, or nowhere, a noble and just indignation called for the most crushing weapons of satire and invective producible in the armory of his inventive genius. There was more hope of the Gentile and of the lower classes than of the aristocratic, cynical Sadducee and the canting, self-righteous Pharisee.

"What think ye?" he says to them. "A man had two sons; and he came to the first,

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and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not; but afterwards repented himself and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. Which of the twain did the will of his father?" Being answered, "the first," the conclusion follows: "Verily, then, the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and harlots believed him; and ye when ye saw it did not even repent yourselves that ye might believe him."

As in line with the preceding utterances, Matthew follows with the vigorous and graphic parable of the Husbandmen and the Vineyard, which is given substantially alike by all three evangelists:

"There was a man that was a householder, which planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a wine-press in it, and

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built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And when the harvest drew near, he sent a servant to the husbandmen to receive his fruits. But they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And he sent another servant, and him also they shamefully maltreated and turned away empty. And still he sent a third, and him also they wounded and cast forth. Likewise did they unto other servants, beating one, stoning another, and killing another. Finally the lord of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I will send my son: it may be they will reverence him. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir! come, let us kill him, and have the inheritance ourselves. And they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him."

Pausing here, for his words to take effect, the speaker continues, "What, therefore, will the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He will miserably destroy those miserable men,

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and let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their season." Then Jesus springs the happy quotation from Psalms 18, 22–23, as relevant to his own Messiahship:

> "The stone which the builders rejected,
> The same was made the head of the corner:
> This was from the Lord,
> And it was marvelous in our eyes." *

This parable, the record tells us, so incensed the scribes and Pharisees that, had they not feared the multitude, who took Jesus for a prophet, they would have seized him then and there. None the less determined, however, was their purpose to compass the death of this most invincible of all the sons of God sent to gather His fruits in Israel.

Conscious of this, Jesus yet turns not back; rather does he press forward toward the final tragedy by still more bold and resolute censure of them and their ways. Each day at Jerusalem

* Matt. 21, 33–46; Mark 12, 1–12; Luke 20, 9–18.

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strengthens his conviction of the hollowness of the established Church, and of the selfishness and cant of its chief defenders. To cite again the example of Luther, as the latter's moral sense and fellow-feeling were outraged at the spectacle of priests filching from the scanty substance of the common people by the sale of the Papal indulgences, so the pain of the compassionate Jesus, in witnessing the deceptions practised on his countrymen and the oppressions of the poor by the rich, burns deeper and deeper, kindling at the core of him a flame of wrath divine.

On one of the last days of the conflict, not unlikely the last, he appears in the court of that great temple which was the pride of the Jew to the remotest outskirts of Roman supremacy. The iniquity of "organized hypocrisy" assumes for him more colossal proportions than ever. More than ever is his heart big with the grievances of the weak against the strong. Religion itself seems harnessed to the chariot of commercial lust.

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In the righteous heat of the moment he would fain, by physical prowess, drive from the sacred precincts the money-changers. "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but *ye* make it a den of robbers."

Under the stress of these influences we may well imagine him spurred to attack hypocrisy and social injustice with unusual vehemence. No time this for moral essays of "glittering generalities," which convict nobody; no time for persuasive utterances that persuade not. Time rather for specific woes against the offenders of a just God. The vast heart of the Son of man quivers with the wrongs of the people as *his* wrongs. He becomes the real orator, fashioned by occasion; the quiver extends into an awful impressiveness of voice, gesture and facial expression, as the pent-up "anger of love" for his weaker fellows discharges itself in the fire-speech of this invective:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be

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borne, and ye yourselves move not the burdens with one of your fingers. All your works you do to be seen of men; for you make broad your phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of your garments, and love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the market-places, and to be called of men, Rabbi.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men, and have taken away the key of knowledge; for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him two-fold more a son of hell than yourselves.

"Woe unto you, ye blind guides! who say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing, but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, it is binding. Ye fools

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and blind! for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that hath sanctified the gold? And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it, he is bound. Ye blind! for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? He, therefore, that sweareth by the altar, sweareth by it and all things thereon. And he that sweareth by the temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. And he that sweareth by the heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, — justice, mercy and faith. Ye blind guides! who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!

"Woe unto you! for ye devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense ye make long prayers: therefore shall ye receive the greater damnation.

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"Woe unto you! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess. Ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. Even so ye appear outwardly righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Blind Pharisee! cleanse first the inside of the cup and platter, that the outside may become clean also.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye *witness* to yourselves that ye are the sons of them that slew the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers!"

Such impassioned denunciation from the prince of peace and good-will exalts the meaning of Shakespeare's lines, —

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> "Great affection, wrestling in thy bosom,
> Doth make an earthquake of nobility."

Offended by what they regard a too harsh usage of his wit and humor, some apostles of higher criticism like to explain away parts of the record. But they, too, may be inconsistent — over-anxious to hold Jesus to their standard of the ideal, to make him *their* Jesus. Utterances not in the fashion of that good taste, mutual courtesy, and compliment, which prevail at a Congress of All Religions in this border-time between two centuries — these are conveniently dropped out, on the theory of misreporting, or of interpolation for partisan and theological purposes. Sometimes the incisive invective given in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew and the eleventh chapter of Luke is disposed of in this way. I take these woes to be in the main genuine, whatever may have been the occasion and order of delivery. I have not adhered strictly to the order followed in either gospel.

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In his fondness for making Jesus figure as an after-dinner speaker, — though in nowise of our latter-day type, — Luke pictures him furiously hurling his woes at the Pharisees and scribes while actually, as an invited guest, partaking of their hospitality. A dramatic situation, surely, but one not less improbable than unbeautiful to look upon. Much more acceptable is Matthew, when he presents them as part of the last public discourse of the Nazarene. In such connection they naturally come at the end of a conflict in which this compassionate and dauntless friend of the "weary and heavy-laden" has been pushed on by the stern "logic of events" to act more the part of aggressive reformer, with his love-angers and "heroic-angers," than was the case when he set out on his divine mission, all-radiant in the hope of converting his countrymen, all-boundless in charity and faith.

Moreover, let the plain word be spoken, that this God-like man had some sublimer business than that of the mere saint teaching

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non-resistance and the amiabilities of life. After due buffeting in this storm-and-battle world, he was driven to the sad conviction, even as are all heroic buffeters for higher laws of comradeship — the conviction that, in order to advance higher human relations, he must needs "cast fire upon the earth,"—"bring not [merely] peace, but a sword." It is possible the peace-seeking Jesus was not wholly a stranger to the sentiment so strenuously expressed in one of Carlyle's letters to Emerson, the prophet of the New World: "There is good in all," he says. "Let us well remember it; and yet remember, too, that it is not good always, or ever, to be 'at ease in Zion'; good often to be in fierce rage in Zion; and that the vile Pythons of this mud-world do verily require to have sun-arrows shot into them, and red-hot pokers struck through them, according to occasion: woe to the man that carries either of these weapons, and does not use it in their presence."

It is not a sign of progress, so much as of

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degeneracy, that we have lost somewhat the brave and corrective faculty of public wrath at iniquity. "There is no more sovereign eloquence," remarks Victor Hugo, "than the truth in indignation." And Luther even said, "When I am angry, I can pray well and preach well."

The Jesus seen by the writer in certain old paintings of Catholic Europe, with face so softened into sickly sainthood that no hero at all of virile mind and resolute will glances at you, — this is not the Jesus of these pages. Quite otherwise. The Jesus here set forth has healthy red blood in him, and electric manhood, and a sublime potency for righteous combat, — living not in passive goodness, but coping in all true knighthood with the "powers of darkness" among men. In Browning's lines, he knew

> "How to grow good and great,
> Rather than simply good, and bring thereby
> Goodness to breathe and live, nor, born i' the brain,
> Die there."

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Conclusion

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Looking forth on eve of frost,
Ere day's ruddy lights be lost,
High in the blue east I see
Planet of Epiphany.

Stood the star, authentic sign,
In the nights of Palestine?
Or is it but a legend fair
Born in memory's teeming air,
And by loyal hearts of old
Dowered with magic manifold?

Very God, or highest man,
Brother cosmopolitan —
Naught it boots to such as find
Touch of his inspiring mind;
The main matter is that we
Catch that life's sublimity,
And in sacramental mood
Eat the flesh and drink the blood
Of his moral lovelihood.

—*Joseph Truman.*

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Conclusion

THESE pages might be multiplied with still other expressions of that aspect of Jesus' nature made prominent herein. Some omitted sayings the reader may be disposed to supply. Others, admitted, he may perhaps be equally disposed to exclude, as not fittingly covered by the terms of the subject. This is to be expected. For, the manifestation of what we call wit, as an aspect of wisdom in the great task of teaching, so varies in form and degree, from the most rollicking pleasantry and coarsest ridicule, comprehended by all, to the subtlest satire and irony, comprehended by few, that diverse people are as diversely affected by the same utterance as they are diversely affected by the same temperature of the air they breathe.

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I confess it never occurred to me to read the far-reaching parable of the Prodigal Son as a representative example of humor, until I happened to meet with Mr. Shorthouse's exposition of it as such, quoted in Dr. M. D. Shutter's "Wit and Humor of the Bible." I suppose I had previously been — perhaps ever shall be — too completely under the spell of its searching pathos to be much open to the humorous side of it. Let this be said, however, that in it we have an undercurrent of humor similar to that welling up in several parables from the same fount. It embodies one more of the vivid, clear-cut antitheses that the Nazarene drew between the typical "frozen Pharisee," fast matrixed in conventional religion and morality, — self-complacent, unpoetic, unsympathetic, — and the hearty, impulsive, passionate wanderer from God who after a season returns home through the saving consciousness and repentance of sin.

Making broad, then, the term wit as an accompaniment and manifestation of wisdom,

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we may see that striking evidences of it are constantly furnished in Jesus' parables, in his laconic sayings, in the unique and picturesque illustrations of his thought. Now he lights up his grave discourse with a bit of pleasantry, like a flash of sunlight on a flowing river. Now he excites his hearers to new and unconventional reasoning by startling paradoxes or unexpected questions and answers. Now he confounds captious critics, or crafty adversaries, with close-welded wit and logic; sometimes shutting off all controversy with a single retort that goes straight to the heart of the matter. Yet again, he lays bare shams and shammers with satire and ridicule, — ay, on occasion, with invective, — sharp and sure of aim.

And pleasantry, repartee, satire, ridicule, irony, invective, — all these manifestations of Jesus' wit and wisdom were sanctified in his master motive of advancing the kingdom of heaven on earth. What the writer has endeavored to display in the preceding pages

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has been with purpose not merely intellectual, but very positively religious and ethical. Indeed, he may appear as offender against the "unities" in his elastic use of his subject, precisely because of the supremacy of this purpose. If upon the reader the personality of Jesus has not grown more commanding of homage, by reason not alone of his invincible greatness of mind, but, more, by reason of his spiritual kingship, of his divine heroism and self-abnegation — if through these pages the reader is not knit closer to that massive personality in bonds of gratitude and love, then has the writer labored for naught.

A son of "grace and truth," sent into this world of flesh and spirit to show forth the Father! Pure and uncompromising citizen of heaven, yet with feet on earth, treading the way of salvation in healthy fellowship with men! Prophet, with all the prophet's prayings and servings, his sorrows and persecutions for righteousness' sake; but also a comrade mingling in the relaxations and

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friendships, the rejoicings and feastings of the social man! In roundness of sympathy, a "high-priest" indeed, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"! rich in all endowment to "weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice,"—rich in all highest responsiveness to the smile in life as well as the tear;—with the sadness and dignity of a god, and the joy and humility of a child! This poetic, social Jesus, this deep-feeling, quick-glancing, heaven-piercing Jesus, sweeps with his master touch, and for godward ends, the chords of wit, of humor, of pathos! Marvelous revealer of the eternal verities; divine satirist of wrong and unveracity; supreme of heroic smiters and loving sacrificers, what reverent Tennyson says I also will say:

> "Thou seemest human and divine,
> The highest, holiest manhood, thou."

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My spirit to yours, dear brother,
Do not mind because many sounding your name do not understand you,
I do not sound your name, but I understand you,
I specify you with joy, O my comrade, to salute you, and to salute those who are with you, before and since, and those to come also,
That we all labor together transmitting the same charge and succession,
We few equals indifferent of lands, indifferent of nations,
We, enclosers of all continents, all castes, allowers of all theologies,
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,
We walk silent among disputes and assertions, but reject not the disputers nor anything that is asserted,
We hear the bawling and din, we are reach'd at by divisions, jealousies, recriminations on every side,
They close peremptorily upon us to surround us, my comrade,
Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over, journeying up and down till we make our ineffaceable mark upon time and the diverse eras,
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of races, ages to come, may prove brethren and lovers as we are.

—*Walt Whitman*
("*To Him that Was Crucified*").

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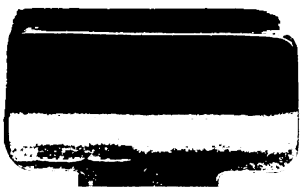

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